

Sketch

Size matters to prophet of Dome



Simon Hoggart

EVERYTHING about the Millennium Dome is going to be huge. Mr Mandelson, the minister in charge of the Dome, said yesterday that he had received "a huge amount" of correspondence about it. He was particularly pleased by the positive response which had followed the "hugely successful" presentation of the Dome's contents. Some MPs carped about the less-than-huge emphasis on the birth of Christ, but Mr Mandelson set their minds at rest. "The Millennium does mark a hugely significant moment in the Christian calendar," he assured us. How much progress has been made? "Tremendous progress." What degree of confidence in the Dome do the British people have? "Enormous confidence." As for the gigantic figures inside the Dome, they set new standards of hugeness. The nose on the main figure will be bigger than the iceberg which sank the Titanic. Its toenails will each be larger than the asteroid XF11, hurtling vaguely towards earth. The nipples on the monstrous baby will contain enough material to make tents for all Montgomery's troops at El Alamein. (Some of these comparisons may not be strictly accurate, but they do convey the notion of mega-hugeness.) And as for Mr Mandelson's ego, nothing seems to dent its massive size. The sign of a levathan among egos is that failure only makes it bigger. For instance, much play was made by both sides with a Gallup poll last week. This revealed that only 2 per cent of the population thought the Dome was the best way to spend Lottery profits. Almost three-quarters of the public think it is a waste of money, and only 31 per cent reckon they would go — half

the number who planned to visit the 1991 Festival of Britain at the same stage. Francis Maude, the Tory spokesman, read out these and other figures, saying they amounted to "a shocking indictment" of Mr Mandelson's management. (Why do some MPs have to talk in tabloid headlines? Nobody speaks like this in real life. "It is a shocking indictment of your foot wiping strategy that you have got mud all over the carpet.") None of this mattered because Mr Mandelson had read the same poll and reached the opposite conclusion. He had fussed around in the statistics and discovered that "Sixty per cent of people showed tremendous confidence that we will get it right on the night. That is a typically British attitude, and their confidence will not be misplaced." However, things took a turn for the worse. An enemy in need is an enemy indeed, and Mr Dennis Skinner rose to put the boot in. "The foot in the question was an old fashioned miner's boot, sparking on the cobbles as he spoke. Mr Mandelson should not, he said, make comparisons with the Festival of Britain. We lived in 'a totally different culture' in those days. Few people had the opportunity to travel, so people were happy to travel down on coaches from Derbyshire, wearing their best frocks (we assume he meant only the women, unless it was an early outing for the Bolsover Transvestite Circle) with a few bob in their pockets. You could almost see the sprigged dresses, smell the fish-paste sandwiches, hear the clatter of brown ale jiggling in the back of the bus. I saw young Skinner pushing his bike uphill while violins played Dvorak's New World. "With your dome there might be three degrees of frost and three feet of snow — then you've got a problem," he warned. "And people want something better than a boot sale, or walking round DFL." DFL? Nobody knew what he meant. But Mr Mandelson didn't care. A visionary gleam came into his eyes. "They will enter the Dome, and they will have the time of their lives," he said, and it was almost possible to believe he might be right.

Review

Wolfe in rather sheepish clothing

Anne Karpf

Ambush At Fort Bragg Radio 4 and BBC Radio Collection

AMERICA'S favourite zeitgeist-chronicler is back. Tom Wolfe, who has entertained us with his savagely witty accounts of 1960s merry men and 1980s masters of the universe, returns with this, his first work of fiction since the 1988 Bonfire Of The Vanities. The peerless probe of middle-class fears and aspirations has now turned his attention to TV news. His new audio novella follows the fortunes of a "sting TV" series, whose hidden cameras unmask wrongdoing and win fat ratings. Irv Durtcher, a balding TV producer with bad posture, has placed surveillance equipment in a sleazy bar to entrap three young homophobic soldiers suspected of beating to death a gay co-worker. But the scoop which Durtcher duly achieves requires prodigious doctored if it isn't to stir all kinds of illiberal sentiments in the viewing audience. Wolfe uses his plot as a journey around television's practices — the scripting of the "catch in the throat", the incriminating effect of blinking on TV, and the sometimes imperceptible difference between editing and censoring. He is amusing about Mary Cary, Durtcher's attention-getting blonde anchor who is carefree-wise, her entire stock of knowledge deriving from the briefings dripped into her ear. And Frank Muller reads it all with delicious relish. But

arriving just after the release of Barry Levinson's far tarter film about spin-doctoring, Wag The Dog, Ambush At Fort Bragg seems relatively restrained and even simplistic about television. So producers use two cameras in order to seamlessly cut out whatever weakens their argument. This is a revelation? No, publicity for the novella has focused on its unusual method of publication — from a two-part appearance in Rolling Stone magazine straight to a three-hour unabridged audio exclusive, an American bestseller which bypassed book form altogether. But after the labyrinthine brilliance of Bonfire Of The Vanities, Ambush At Fort Bragg looks too thin even for novella status. No, what drives Wolfe's narrative are his sardonically perceptive descriptions of America. He is far sharper on television's effects — celebrity's inescapable aura — than his shifty techniques. He maps out a provincial American town, from mail to massage parlour to redneck patois, with precision. And he is keenly sensitive to not only professional vanity, but also rampant envy: in Durtcher he depicts the Jew who can never, however hard he tries, be integrated into WASP culture. Ambush At Fort Bragg purports to ask a serious question about television: how far is it acceptable to censor in liberal cause? But Tom Wolfe is far more successful at depicting an America divided by class, gender, ethnicity, and geography. In this pot, no one melts.

Blaze at picket huts raises fear of anti-union violence

Seumas Milne

ARSONISTS have burned down picketing huts and shelters in the Magnet Kitchens factory in Darlington, where 300 workers were sacked 18 months ago for striking in support of an across-the-board 3 per cent pay rise. Darlington police confirmed they had investigated

the fire but had been unable to identify anyone involved. A spokesman said that although surveillance cameras inside the plant picked up pickets running when the fire broke out, they had not recorded the two men. A spokesman said yesterday the fire was an alarming sign that the dispute was degenerating into North American-style anti-union violence.

Trip to Jewish settlement on West Bank must be made with our escort, says Netanyahu spokesman

Cook visit curbed by Israel

Julian Borger, Middle East Correspondent, and Ian Black in Amman

ROBIN Cook, the Foreign Secretary, is due to make a controversial visit to a Jewish settlement on occupied territory near Jerusalem today, but on terms laid down by the Israeli government. The visit had earlier threatened to torpedo Mr Cook's new Middle East peace initiative at its launch.

Diplomatic sources said Mr Cook would visit Har Homa, a new settlement under construction south-east of Jerusalem, with an Israeli official escort, and not with local Palestinian leaders as originally planned. David Bar-Ilan, a spokesman for the Israeli prime minister, said: "He will go with our escort, with our people, who will explain what is going on there."

The deal followed hectic late night negotiations over the proposed excursion to the West Bank hillside, known to the Arabs as Jabal Abu Ghneim. It became a primary symbol of the Israeli-Palestinian territorial struggle when work began on the new settlement last March, sparking riots and inflicting a blow to the peace process, from which it has yet to recover. Mr Cook's venture into the

Middle East, in what was hoped to be a diplomatic keynote of Britain's EU presidency, could hardly have got off to a more turbulent start. His arrival in Cairo was postponed for over 12 hours by a sandstorm, and his three-day, six-country itinerary remained last night at the mercy of heavy winds and dust clouds. Then, hours before the Foreign Secretary's scheduled arrival in Israel and the Palestinian territories, a senior Israeli government official summoned British journalists to deliver an attack on British and European diplomacy in the region. The official said that a visit to the settlement would "trigger a crisis", and end all European hopes of playing a bigger role in Middle East peace talks.

"It takes two to tango, the Europeans want to come here because they want to play a role. Without the Israelis, you cannot play a role." After news of the Har Homa visit was published in the local press, graffiti was daubed on the British consulate in West Jerusalem, accusing Mr Cook of being an anti-Semite, and telling him to go home. A British official called the graffiti "regrettable, but it hasn't scared the living day-lights out of us."

Mr Cook, speaking to journalists in Cairo, shrugged off Israeli criticism, saying that he was determined to visit the site. In London, a spokesman for Tony Blair said: "The Foreign Secretary has to have some input into where he goes" and stressed that the decision to visit Har Homa was jointly taken by all European Union foreign ministers. However, initial plans to go to the site with the top Palestinian politician in Jerusalem, Faisal Husseini, were dropped. Mr Cook is now expected to meet Mr Husseini elsewhere in East Jerusalem. Under the terms of the agreement, Mr Cook is to be accompanied to the site by two Israeli officials, but his aides insisted that this was not a climbdown as he would maintain his original intention and meet Palestinians there.

"I have no objection whatsoever to Israeli officials explaining their point of view to me, as I will explain my point of view to Mr Netanyahu," Mr Cook told reporters in Amman. A spokesman for the Palestinian Authority, Marwan Kanafani, said there would be no Palestinian objection to an Israeli-managed visit to the settlement. Mr Bar-Ilan dismissed earlier reports that Mr Cook's meeting and dinner with Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu might be cancelled as a result of the row. Israel raises stakes, page 6

Clinton launches counter-attack

Spin doctors swing into action after new sex claims

Joanna Coles in New York

PRESIDENT Bill Clinton yesterday said he was "mystified" by Kathleen Willey's allegations of sexual harassment made against him on television by a former White House volunteer. "Nothing improper happened," he insisted in response to the claim by Kathleen Willey that he fondled her breasts and laid her hand on his penis. The embattled White House spin doctors swung into action furiously trying to discredit his accuser. The White House press secretary, Mike McCurry, said Mr Clinton did not watch the CBS 60 Minutes show. "He doesn't need to... He was there and he knows what the truth is," he said. Although Mr Clinton emphatically denies Ms Willey's claims, when asked if the president was calling her a liar, Mike McCurry said he wasn't.



Bill Clinton claims he is "mystified" by Kathleen Willey's allegations of sexual harassment

PHOTOGRAPH BY WIN MCNAMEE

But his critics and even his supporters, in private, agreed that Ms Willey's television testimony on Sunday night was extremely credible. Commentators pointed to the amount of detail and noted that she had been a reluctant witness who, unlike Paula Jones, another of the president's accusers, was not being paid or backed by an institution with a political motive. As a fundraising Democrat Ms Willey could not be considered part of what Hillary Clinton has described as a "rightwing conspiracy to bring down the presidency." Orrin Hatch, the chairman of the Senate judiciary committee, told CNN that if Ms Willey was telling the truth, "then I have to tell you, I think this presidency would be over."

The House of Representatives Speaker, Newt Gingrich, said Ms Willey's interview was "very sobering." And George Stephanopoulos, a former Clinton aide, said he thought the accusations so grave and believable that the president would have to answer the charges. "This is the first time you have a credible person saying something hasn't happened in Arkansas 10 years ago, not when he was governor, but right next to the Oval Office. I think that's tough," he said. According to one White

House official: "Ms Willey is a well-spoken person who definitely put a different face on this than Paula Jones, but at the end of the day, there are more than two people who know what happened? I don't see how it changes anything." Ms Willey, who last week reluctantly gave evidence to the Grand Jury investigating allegations that Mr Clinton had had a sexual relationship with her, went public with her accusations, claiming there had been too many rumours and bad stories and that she wanted to set the record straight. But yesterday Mr Clinton

said: "I have done everything I could to clarify the situation," adding that he was "bewildered" by her attack on him. "I have a very clear memory of the meeting," he said. Although his lawyer, Robert Bennett, also appeared on the programme to deny Ms Willey's accusations, he was accused by commentators of failing to maintain eye contact with the interviewer, Ed Bradley. And yesterday morning White House spokeswoman Ann Lewis was immediately despatched for further de-

nials on the morning news programmes. "What I saw was someone who talked about being angry, feeling that she was being taken advantage of," Ms Lewis told the Today Show on NBC. "And yet in 1996, when she was no longer associated with the president or the White House, she came to see me and said, 'I really want to work on this campaign.' There was such a contradiction between what I saw and heard [in the television interview] and the person I met in 1996." Only moments later Ms

Spock, father to millions, dies

continued from page 1

licated job if you take it easy. But his relaxed, informal approach also earned him opponents, including the Reverend Norman Vincent Peale who was to become the "baby doctor's" notorious nemesis. During the 1960s political protests, when Dr Spock became a peace activist demonstrating against Vietnam, Mr Peale accused him of creating a permissive generation whose parents were unable to control them. It was a criticism which Spock rejected, but it continued to dog him. "I have spent an inordinate amount of time denying it," he told one reporter as he celebrated his 88th birthday. "It is so annoying. I always believed in giving a child firm, clear leadership. It's not remotely my idea that you give a child what he wants or let him do what he wants. But even when I get to England or France they will say 'Now, what about this permissiveness?'" Oddly, after the book sold 750,000 copies in its first year, he said he did not immediately enjoy his success. "I was scared to death," he later confessed to a friend. "I was scared the book would be misunderstood, that somebody thinking she was following my advice would do something that would make a child worse, or even kill a child." But the book continued to sell, making him millions and ensuring him \$150,000 a year in royalties for life. At six feet four inches tall, Spock not only towered above his colleagues but was also credited with influencing a generation of future child psychologists. The British doctor, Penelope Leach, who took over his mantle for the latter part of the 20th century, said his book was: "My Bible when I was bringing up my own children. He was the first person who seemed to understand parents' feeling and infants' feelings." President Clinton said last night he was saddened by the death of Spock, and praised the "sage advice and gentle support" he offered generations of families.

Europe, with the aid of sponsors, aims to win race back to the Moon

Tim Radford Science Editor

EUROPEAN space scientists could beat the Americans in the race to land again on the Moon. If European space ministers approve the plan put forward as a millennium gesture, a European industry-sponsored robot could be sampling the icy soils of the Moon by 2001. EuroMoon 2000 was supported yesterday by the director general of the European Space Agency and by Britain's science minister, John Battle. The £40 million plan would require backing from the space industry, and money from commercial sponsors, who would exploit the prestige associated with the venture. The plan will get a final decision in the summer. If it is agreed, three tons of

hardware would go up on a giant Ariane V rocket late in 2000. An orbiter would map the Earth's nearest neighbour, and early in 2001 a lander would touch down at the highest point of the lunar south pole, to begin "feeling" the make-up of the soil. It would be Europe's first touchdown on another part of the solar system and the first venture into space by commercial sponsors. And it would be the first commercial exploitation of another heavenly body. EuroMoon 2000 was first proposed as a European way to mark the Millennium. It was promoted within the European Space Agency by Wubbo Ockels, the first European to go aloft with Nasa in the 1980s. He suggested a two-part mission to the Peak of Perpetual Light, a crater rim at the south pole where the Sun always shines. But what began as a gesture gained dramatic importance following the announcement by Nasa 12 days ago that instruments aboard a Lunar Prospector spacecraft had detected millions of tons of water at the Moon's poles — exactly where the Europeans had proposed to land a robot probe. Suddenly it looked as though European scientists could directly confirm what Nasa instruments merely inferred. Several industrial giants — including Matra Marconi Space — have already committed themselves to the project. Antonio Rodota, director-general of the European Space Agency in London, said yesterday: "The appeal for me is not purely the scientific side. The other appeal is that we are trying to approach this problem in an unconventional way. The image of an initiative

like EuroMoon could appeal to sponsors." He went on: "We have to look to the future, we have to have an innovative approach to be at the forefront of space in the future. We know that the US is leading today. But we are second — and we have to become nearer to first." Everybody within the space agency was convinced that the landing would be worthwhile. "We will have to rush," he said. "Usually a programme like this needs four or five years. We are shooting for two years. It's quite a challenge." Mr Battle, who was opening a Department of Trade and Industry exhibition and conference to mark Set 98, national science week, said: "We like the idea of it. Our attitude in practice will be determined by looking for funds within existing budgets."

Only moments later Ms

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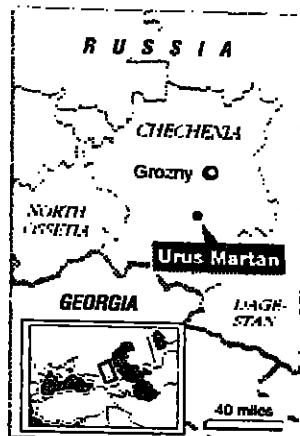
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Most families... the difference... all bad. Fidd... only have a... Linda Grant

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Fears for captives after rescue bid goes wrong



Aid workers
Jon James and
Camilla Carr
went out to
Chechnia to
help rebuild
children's lives
after the war.
Since July they
have been held
hostage in a
law-and-order
twilight zone



The Chechen forces who resisted Russian rule are now fighting to restore order in the breakaway region

PHOTOGRAPH: OLEG NIKSHIN

Raiders fail to free Britons

James Meek in Moscow.

HEAVILY armed Chechen commandos fought a bloody gun battle yesterday in an unsuccessful attempt to free two Britons held hostage for eight months in the chaotic southern Russian region.

One member of the Chechen anti-terrorist team was killed and five wounded before the commander withdrew, fearing for the lives of Britons Jon James and Camilla Carr. One of the hostage-takers was also killed.

The operation may have been inspired by the warmth of reception given to the Chechen president, Aslan Maskhadov, on his visit to Britain last week. On his return he said that Baroness Thatcher had agreed to lead a Western mission to the region, a priceless gift to Chechnia's campaign for independence from Russia but only once the Britons, held since July, were freed.

Yesterday's abortive raid on the suspected hiding place

of the hostage-takers — the town of Urus-Martan on the road south from Chechnia's war-ravaged capital, Grozny — was led by veteran rebel fighter Khunkar Israpilov, the man appointed by Mr Maskhadov to end the kidnappers' reign of misery.

Shortly after midnight local time General Israpilov's team set out for Urus-Martan after a tip-off. The gun battle took place on the approach to the town.

The information that this group abducted and holds in captivity Chechens and one Ossetian citizen besides the Britons was confirmed in this operation," said Gen Israpilov, who goes into action carrying a sniper's rifle.

"The information that this group abducted and holds in captivity Chechens and one Ossetian citizen besides the Britons was confirmed in this operation," said Gen Israpilov, who goes into action carrying a sniper's rifle.

Speaking from her Bath home last night, Ms Carr's mother, Helen Hunt, said of the operation: "It is difficult

to know what to think. I am glad something is being done but it sounds as though this was a very dangerous raid and that is worrying.

"I hope more steps are taken just as long as they are safe ones."

"I just hope and pray that this attack will lead to other channels being opened and my daughter coming home."

After a 21-month war against Russian government forces in which the region was devastated, tens of thousands of people were killed and the rebels astonished the world with the tenacity of their resistance, Chechnia remains outside international law. The world recognises it as part of Russia, but since pulling out its troops, Moscow has no control over it.

Mr James, aged 37, and Ms Carr, aged 40, from Ross-on-Wye, were among a handful of foreign aid workers who entered the devastated, impoverished area after the war to help rebuild lives — in their case by rehabilitating battle-traumatised children.

Like many of their colleagues, they were kidnapped. Stealing people for ransom is a tradition as old as hospitality in the Caucasus, and accusations regularly surface in the Russian media that some of the beneficiaries of what has become a profitable business are senior members of the Chechen administration. Millions of pounds in ransom money has been paid out to free foreign, Chechen and Russian hostages.

But the British Government insists it will not pay ransoms and the Quaker charity that Ms Carr and Mr James worked for, the Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development, has few resources.

Two Metropolitan police officers travelled to the area recently to meet Chechen anti-terrorist officials. Britain's ambassador to Moscow, Sir Andrew Wood, has broadcast an appeal on Chechen television. Photos of the hostages with the word 'Help' have been distributed across the territory, and Tony Blair has raised the issue with President Yeltsin.

Members of a Russian television crew, released from 101 days in captivity last year on payment of a \$200,000 ransom, said they had been kept in difficult conditions but had not been seriously mistreated. They had been moved often, kept in cellars, mountain caves and dugouts, and sometimes chained.

Freed French aid workers said their captors were heavily armed, wore masks at all times and shunted the hostages between different dank cellars, where they were fed bread and water.

British officials say no clear ransom demand has ever been transmitted for Ms Carr and Mr James. However, Gen Israpilov told the English-language Moscow Times earlier this year that

he believed the British embassy had received a video of the two and that a ransom of \$2 million (£1.2 million) had been demanded. The embassy denied this.

He also said he had already mounted three raids to free the Britons, but that the hostages had always been moved before his team arrived.

Ironically, the fate of British prisoners in the Caucasus depends heavily on the actions of the Chechen prime minister, Shamil Basayev, who has offered a \$100,000 reward for information leading to their release. Mr Basayev is a war hero in Chechnia but is wanted in Russia for his seizure of more than 1,000 civilian hostages in a southern Russian hospital during the conflict.

Drama as Lawrence inquiry adjourned

David Pallister

THE public inquiry into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence was dramatically adjourned yesterday after counsel for Stephen's parents said they wanted an urgent meeting with the Home Secretary to discuss "legitimate concerns" following a report that the chairman, Sir William Macpherson, had been insensitive in handling race issues.

In putting the hearing back for a week, Sir William, a 71-year-old retired High Court judge, angrily dismissed "with contempt" the suggestions that he was unsuitable to lead the inquiry.

Last night the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, said he would be meeting Neville and Doreen Lawrence today to discuss their concerns.

But he added: "The Lord Chancellor and I have complete confidence in Sir William's ability to conduct this inquiry with fairness and sensitivity."

Before the inquiry was able to get under way, Sir William opened with a statement saying that criticisms made of him in the Observer were either "factually incorrect" or "gross misrepresentations". As well as writing a letter of complaint to The Observer's editor, Will Hutton, and demanding an apology, Sir William indicated he had consulted his lawyers with a view to legal action.

He said he had only mentioned the article "to dismiss the personal allegations with contempt".

"Personal attacks and misrepresentations have to be borne by those who take on public duties. These allegations are between myself and the newspaper."

He said the article referred to cases he had handled "eight, nine, 10 years ago."

Sir William said he was also concerned about claims that he had denied one party or the other access to documents.

"This is wholly untrue. That is a reflection not only on myself but on my advisers and staff. I resent and deny the allegation."

"In view of the fact that my own position is to be discussed, it is wise and sensible I should say no more."

But within an hour of the inquiry breaking up, Sir William issued a formal denial of the allegations in which he admitted that the recommendations and conclusions of the Police Complaints Authority report into the affair had not been disclosed because of disciplinary proceedings.

He was particularly upset about a suggestion that he and his wife had gone to Royal Ascot for the afternoon rather than hearing a race attack case. Sir William said the case "was settled by agreement and consent of both parties before noon on the trial date, after negotiations in which I allowed the parties as much time as they wished." He said there was no question of neglecting the court or the litigant.

He also said he stood by a 1991 judgment in which he ruled that Cleveland Education Authority was right to allow a white woman to remove her daughter from a class of mainly Asian pupils.

In making his adjournment application, Michael Mansfield QC accepted that the family's concerns were "in part triggered" by the Observer article.

He referred to a statement made at last year's inquest into Stephen's murder at which Mrs Lawrence claimed the whole justice system, from the initial investigation to the Old Bailey trial of three men, "had let them down".

"They felt there were serious deficiencies at all stages," Mr Mansfield said.

"It is against this background that they wish to take this unusual step. They are concerned at this stage to ensure that the future of the inquiry is heard under the best possible circumstances that can be contrived and put together by the Home Office and ourselves."

A spokesman for the Observer said last night: "We are seriously considering the text of the judge's letter."

Judge long on sentences, short on words, page 4

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The hostages

JON James, aged 37, was born in Lydney, Gloucestershire, and started life in modest circumstances. His father worked as a postman in the area.

He met Camilla Carr while she was working as an administrative assistant in a community centre in Ross-on-Wye.

His taste for adventure became apparent at the age of 10 when he canoed across the River Severn's tidal bore.

His family say he maintained his interest in outdoor pursuits and rejected materialism.

His mother, Doris, said all he ever wanted was enough money to live on.

Mr James has a teenage son, Ben, from a previous marriage, who lives with his mother in Cheltenham.

Mr James' interest in alternative therapies and Celtic and native American cultures drew him to Ms Carr. They are described by friends and family as kindred spirits. In 1997 the couple decided to drive across Europe in a Lada to work for The Little Star, a Quaker charity rehabilitating traumatised children under the auspices of the Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development.

After a stop-off in Moscow they drove south to Chechnia. Mr James' family received a photograph of them huddled over a stove shortly after they had arrived in the capital, Grozny. Scribbled on the back are the words: "No key, no electricity, so we make tea."



British hostages Jon James and Camilla Carr

CAMILLA Carr, aged 40, was born in Bath and educated at Shrewsbury School where she is remembered as a jaunty girl with an earnest streak.

She was fond of sport and captained the school hockey team. After leaving school she lived in Amsterdam for several years, where she put on avant-garde plays. She went on to become a respected sculptress, and taught 'ai chi' in Devon.

Ms Carr has a son from a previous marriage, Ashok, who lives in France.

Alexandra Little, Ms Carr's sister, and her brother-in-law David have been leading figures in the campaign to raise the profile of the hostages' plight. Just before Christmas they held a special service where the opening hymn was Ms Carr's favourite, Lord of the Dance.

The sisters last spoke just after Ms Carr bought furniture in Moscow for a centre to rehabilitate traumatised children.

Their father served as a bomber pilot in the second world war. Their mother, Helen, graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art.

Ms Carr takes after her mother's bohemian side of the family. Both travelled to Rajasthan in 1994 for a conference to promote world peace.

Adventure and a taste for the exotic run in the family. Ms Carr is a descendant of Thomas Cobbe, a British army officer reputed to have married an Indian princess in the last century.

Most families have a go at inculcating fairly simple ideas about the difference between right and wrong — stealing, murder, lying, all bad. Fiddling the expenses, war, phoning in sick when you only have a hangover — don't bother your head with all that, kid.

Linda Grant casts her vote for good citizen classes

G2 page 7

*The gross rate includes quarterly interest rewards of 1.5% gross per annum and an annual interest reward of 0.5% gross per annum on balances of £10,000+. A balance of £2,000-£9,999 will earn interest of 6.10% gross per annum including quarterly and annual interest rewards. Credit interest and quarterly reward interest is paid quarterly and annual reward interest is paid annually. All rates are subject to variation. Where appropriate, lower rate (as currently 20%) will be deducted at source from the interest paid (which may be reclaimed by residents non-homeowners). Otherwise, (for example, subject to the required registration form), interest will be paid gross. The gross rate is the rate before deducting income tax. We may monitor and record your phone calls with us in order to maintain and improve our service. National Westminster Bank Plc, Registered Office: 41 Lombard, London EC3P 2BP. Registered Number: 929027. England. Reg No. 17296

4 BRITAIN

Two accused of killing British pair

Helena Smith in Athens

TWO Albanians, who confessed to killing a retired British couple on the Greek island of Cephalonia, will today be charged with murder.

The detective leading the inquiry said Lambros Pappas, aged 26, and Eduard Elmazi, 20, admitted the killings after being arrested at gunpoint on Saturday on the neighbouring island of Lefkas after a brief chase on foot.

Confessions were signed on Sunday at the police station in Lixourion, a few miles from the murder scene.

The pair have purportedly described how they stabbed Roy and Judith Eccles with a butcher's knife and pitchfork while attempting to break into their isolated village home last Thursday.

The 55-year-old former electrical engineer and his 49-year-old accountant wife from Bedford had decided to start a second life on the island last October. "They said they didn't intend to kill them but became panic-stricken when the Eccles were roused from their sleep," said Chief Inspector Dimitrios Christoforatos. "I have to say they showed little remorse."

Mr Christoforatos said the Albanians made the confession after police matched fingerprints found in the victims' home as well as blood samples on their clothes with their own.

The double murder has sent shock waves through the idyllic island where British expatriates have been inspired to buy "dream villas" since reading the Louis de Bernières novel *Captain Correlli's Mandolin* which is set on the island during the second world war.

Yesterday, hundreds of outraged locals gathered outside the police station where the two were being held and vowed to "lynch" them.

"The Albanians have come here and caused nothing but trouble," said one protester.

The Eccles' fate has highlighted the issue of illicit refugees from Albania. At an emergency meeting in Athens yesterday the Greek public order minister, Giorgos Romenos, announced that draconian measures would be taken to deal with the dramatic increase in crime across Greece. Much of the surge has been blamed on Albanian drugs and arms smugglers who are believed to be targeting "rich" foreigners.



Murder victim Zoe Evans: Body found in an animal hole

Jury told child's killer left 2 clues

Geoffrey Gibbs

AN ARMY driver killed his step-daughter and buried her in an animal hole on a deserted hillside after taking her from the family's home, Bristol court heard yesterday.

Despite a search by police, army personnel and members of the public, the body of nine-year-old Zoe Evans lay undiscovered for six weeks following her disappearance.

shared with her mother and stepfather in Warmminster, Wiltshire.

Miles Evans, aged 24, known to the family as Taff, a private in the Royal Logistic Corps, has denied murdering Zoe in January last year.

Alan Pascoe, QC, prosecuting, told the court the girl's murder was a "dreadful and heart-rending crime".

She died as a result of suffocation after a small crop top was stuffed into her mouth and had suffered a fracture to the nasal bone that resulted



Accused stepfather Miles Evans: Prosecution claims he left behind his T-shirt when allegedly burying nine-year-old Zoe

It was not possible to say what damage was done to the lower part of her body because it had been disturbed by animals before its discovery on Battlesbury Hill.

The prosecution said Evans played the part of an anxious parent after Zoe's mother, Paula, raised the alarm.

But the "careless killer" had left behind crucial evidence — his own blue No Fear T-shirt, stained with Zoe's blood and with seminal and vaginal fluid from sexual intercourse with his wife ear-

girl's knickers, probably dropped when he was on his way to bury her body.

"It is the T-shirt in particular, but not alone, that points to this defendant as the killer of Zoe Evans," Mr Pascoe said.

The court heard that Zoe was born after her mother had a holiday romance in Malaysia. A year after her daughter's birth, Paula — who now goes by her own mother's name of Hamilton — married an army private with whom she had a son.

She met Miles Evans in ended in divorce and the couple married a year later.

On the evening before Zoe disappeared, Evans came home having a failed basic army fitness test. The family had tea together and he and Zoe had a play-fight. The children went to bed at around 10.20pm and the adults stayed up for a few drinks. Evans and Paula went to bed around 11.45pm but did not look in on Zoe. She was discovered missing by her mother the following morning.

Mr Pascoe told the court investigation, both Evans and his wife had been arrested. But the child's mother had played no part whatsoever in Zoe's death.

Zoe's mother, who described her daughter as "a lovely little girl, good as gold" agreed under cross examination from Alun Jenkins QC, for Evans, that her children were happy when they went to bed on the night of Zoe's disappearance.

She agreed that Evans had a good relationship with Zoe and had no reason to kill her.

Drunken soccer fan jailed for three months for punching a linesman

Sarah Hall

ADRUNKEN football fan who knocked out a linesman for sending off a goalkeeper during a Division One match was yesterday jailed for three months.

Sheffield United fan John Corker, aged 34, from Eastbourne, East Sussex, was also banned for a year from all games in England and Wales after admitting assault causing actual bodily harm during a game between the Yorkshire club and Portsmouth on January 31.

The meat porter — whose attack left Edward Martin unconscious for five minutes — had already vowed never to attend another football match, and has been banned for life by his club from games at Bramhall Lane.

Portsmouth magistrates court heard how Corker had

the game at the Hampshire club's Fratton Park ground — and lost his temper when the referee showed Sheffield United's goalkeeper Simon Tracey the red card for handling the ball outside his area.

He stormed on to the pitch and punched the 38-year-old referee's assistant on the side of his head, causing him to collapse on the pitch.

Mr Martin, a greengrocer from Halsway, Somerset, spent two nights under observation in hospital, and is suffering from a stress-related disorder following his ordeal, the court heard.

But acting stipendiary magistrate Richard Clarke rejected a defence plea against a jail sentence. "This was a totally unprovoked attack on a football official," he said. "You had a considerable amount to drink and behaved in a way which was totally unacceptable to the

Deal halts high life revelations

£180m civil action comes to end with honour intact on both sides

Sarah Hall

IT WAS billed as the most expensive civil action in English legal history and a case that would lay bare the opulent lifestyle of the Sultan of Brunei's youngest brother and his sexual shenanigans.

Tales of 40 prostitutes entering the Dorchester Hotel, central London, at any one time for Prince Jefri of Brunei's pleasure had emerged, as had details of his taste in erotic trinkets and art.

He was a "one-man walking market" ready to be tapped by wealthy businessmen Bob and Rafi Manoukian — former close friends and emiseraries worth £250 million — who over-charged Prince Jefri three times the normal price during £650 million.

worth of transactions, the court heard.

Watche Manoukian, known as Bob and listed as the 129th richest man in Britain, told the court that Prince Jefri and Bob and Rafi Manoukian had developed such an "appetite for girls" that his conduct had become "unacceptable by Western standards". Mr Manoukian, who is a Christian, claimed that the relationship had broken down on religious grounds and because he had criticised the prince.

But from today such salacious allegations will no longer be bandied around court 76 of the Royal Courts of Justice, where Mr Justice Longmore, 10 barristers and numerous solicitors had expected to be ensconced for six months as both sides sued for a total of £180 million.

During a three-minute hear-

ing, the case — in open court for the past five weeks — will be formally settled with both sides agreeing to drop their claims. Costs — estimated at £10 million — are believed to be shared, and honour will be asserted all round.

A statement issued by both parties yesterday read: "His Royal Highness Prince Jefri and Bob and Rafi Manoukian have withdrawn their claims and ended their litigation."

"They are satisfied that the outcome is honourable for all sides. The terms of the settlement are not being disclosed and both sides have agreed to keep all aspects of the agreement confidential."

Last night, it was unclear which side had provided the impetus for the out-of-court agreement. Prince Jefri had been in London hotel over the weekend, which will prevent Prince Jefri, 44, being cross-examined and the Manoukians disclosing more details of their business dealings.

The hastily-curtailed legal battle waged in the High Court could have cost up to £16 million.

It involved Prince Jefri being sued for £80 million by the Manoukians brothers, who claimed he reneged on two property deals — a £55 million agreement to buy the Adelphi building in the Strand, and a £25 million deal to renovate the first five storeys above the former Playboy Club in London's Park Lane.

In turn, the prince, who plays polo with Prince Charles and recently bought the Queen's Jewellers Asprey's for £244 million, was suing Bob, 53, and Rafi, 44, for more than £100 million.

The playboy prince, who has four wives and three children, claimed Rafi had exploited their close relationship to make tens of millions of pounds and had misled him as to the true market value of the Park Lane building.

Judge long on sentences but short on words

David Pallister on man who will head inquiry into death of Stephen Lawrence

AS BEFFTS a man who commanded the Territorial 21 SAS regiment, Sir William Macpherson had a reputation as being a tough judge, short on words.

At Sir William's retirement ceremony in the High Court in 1996 where he was serenaded by a bagpipe, Lord Justice Leggatt described him as "not famous for his lenient sentences". His legendary severity at the bar "became even more so on the bench."

Sir William, now aged 71, responded: "Many have asked me why a Highland chief should be here at all. I simply remind them that my great, great, great grandfather was killed at the battle of Falkirk in 1746 while fighting for Bonnie Prince Charlie. I was always determined to come down and take it out on the English."

Among his more high profile cases was the killing of the triple child murderer Robert Black in 1984 to a minimum of 35 years.

Sir William, the 27th chief of his clan, was called to the bar in 1952 after serving as a captain in the Scots Guards.

He became a High Court judge in 1983 and one of the criticisms levelled at him was that in a survey of 15 judges hearing immigration cases in 1987 and 1988 he was the least likely to grant leave for judicial review.

Immigration lawyers took a dim view of him placing him on the right of the judicial political spectrum. Yesterday Sir William defended his record by saying he only granted leave when there was a reasonable chance of success.

Those who have appeared before him say he is a non-interventionist. "He lets counsel get on with it and doesn't often descend into the arena." Another praised him as "one of the best High Court judges I've come across, intel-

'My great, great, great, great grandfather was killed at the battle of Falkirk in 1746 while fighting for Bonnie Prince Charlie. I was always determined to come down and take it out on the English'

Sir William Macpherson (above)

ligent, approachable, no edge, no side." And a third view: "You will find well in Mr Justice Macpherson's countenance nothing exotic, but a lot better than oatmeal."

A particularly sensitive case was the hearing of the three detectives charged with fabricating evidence against the Guildford Four. After they were found not guilty at the Old Bailey in 1993, Sir William remarked: "The public and certainly those involved on the legal side should not wish to gaze at the entrails of this case further."

Edmund Lawson, QC, the Lawrence inquiry counsel, defended one of the policemen, arguing that the Four were guilty.

When he was appointed by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to head the inquiry last year, Imran Khan, solicitor for the family, acknowledged that Sir William was a well-respected judge. Mr Khan said ideally he and the family would have wanted a judge who had some obvious empathy with the black community because they could understand racism.

A number of names had been put forward by the family but Mr Straw told them that it had not been possible to get any of them to serve.

News in brief

Ten years for man who raped wife

A FORMER special constable who raped his wife seven times over five days after she told him she was leaving him was jailed for 10 years yesterday. Paul Arvanitakis, 33, of South London, was convicted of falsely imprisoning and raping her last August. He chose to defend himself at the Old Bailey.

Arvanitakis, who had previous convictions for violence and crimes against women, first duped his wife into believing he accepted she was leaving him for a fresh start in America. But instead, he imprisoned her in a small flat for five days, shackling her to a radiator and raping her.

When it is bad to talk

A CAMPAIGN to warn motorists against driving while using hand-held mobile phones was launched by the roads minister, Baroness Hayman, yesterday to coincide with the publication of new guidelines on the use of mobiles.

The guidelines, from the Federation of Communication Services, say drivers should never hold a mobile phone while driving, should use hands-free mobiles only when it is safe to do so, and to keep conversations short and simple. Difficult calls and business "meetings" on the road are seen as unsafe.

Terrorist case postponed

AN OLD Bailey judge yesterday agreed to postpone the trial of three Algerians charged last summer with terrorist offences. Sihane Kabilene, Farid Boukemiche and Sofiane Souidi were charged with conspiracy, with persons unknown, "to possess articles for a purpose connected with the commission, preparation, or instigation of acts of terrorism". Judge Henry Fennell QC, agreed to postpone the trial due to have opened last week, until next month. — Richard Norton-Taylor

Discarded baby strangled

A NEWBORN baby found discarded in a bin bag outside a theme park in Warrington, Cheshire, had been strangled, police said yesterday. The body of "Callum" was discovered on Saturday by a man walking his dog in a wooded area.

Detective Chief Inspector John Hester said the child appeared to have been healthy when born but had been strangled within a matter of hours. He appealed to the boy's mother to come forward. "This lack of news about the mother suggests three possible scenarios. One, that she is somehow involved in Callum's death; two, that she is now too ill to come forward; or three, that someone else may have disposed of the body and that person is holding the mother against her will."

'Cat Stevens' returns

YSLAM, once better known as singer Cat Stevens, yesterday returned to music after 20 years, by launching a charity album to raise money for charities in war-ravaged Bosnia. The album, entitled *I Have No Cansons That Roar*, also features Bosnian artists singing songs from the war period.

Yusuf, who sings on an a cappella track and has written another for the album, says he believes he is now more of a poet than a singer. "I am not a professional musician any more. Music has its place and I do it for love of a noble cause," he said. Yusuf was joined at the launch by Martin Bell, the Independent MP for Tarron, who reported from Bosnia as a BBC journalist.

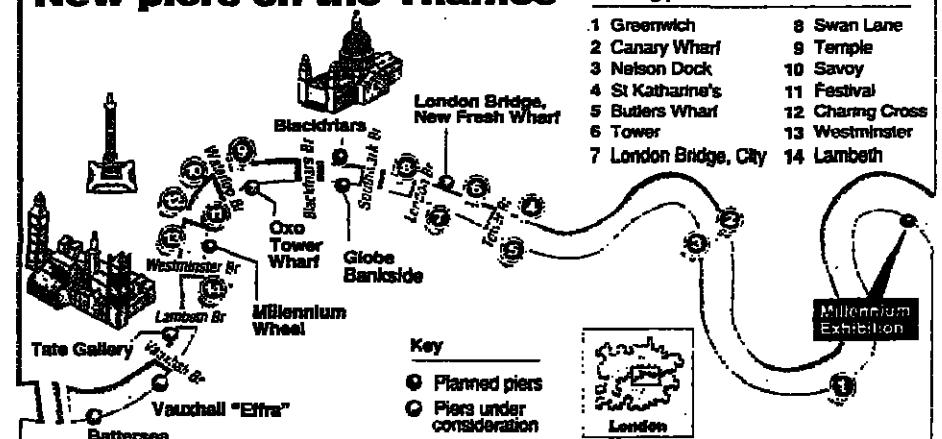
Prescott launches plan to revive Thames

Keith Harper Transport Editor

A£21 million transformation of London's river landscape with 13 new piers and a boat service for the millennium was launched yesterday by the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott.

The first visible sign that the Thames could rediscover its potential as a transport route will come in the spring when a new £1.1 million pier is opened

New piers on the Thames



at the Tate Bankside at the new Globe Theatre. New or redeveloped piers are proposed at Waterloo, Blackfriars and Westminster.

Mr Prescott said that new boats and new and upgraded piers would forge links between the north and south banks. His idea was to enhance access to London's historical and cultural "string of pearls" landmarks.

For millions of visitors to the Millennium Experience at Greenwich, south London, there will be express

services from central London, and a shuttle service. Hopper services will also criss-cross the Thames, linking its cultural landmarks from Westminster to Canary Wharf and Rotherhithe.

Mr Prescott said although the services were aimed at tourists, the Government wanted to encourage commuters and locals to use the services after the millennium. This would require extra financial help to the operators to make the service more attractive

for regular use, and the Government "will make sure that this happens".

The impetus for the plan came when Mr Prescott took a trip down the Thames last summer to make a speech at Canary Wharf. He agreed a private-public sector partnership should develop proposals for new river services.

The partnership comprises several London boroughs, as well as Railtrack, the Port of London Authority and the London Tourist Board.

6 WORLD NEWS

Long-awaited Holocaust statement fails to apologise for Nazi collaboration by the Catholic Church

Vatican disappoints Jews

John Hooper in Rome

SENIOR Jewish figures reacted to the Vatican's long-awaited statement on the Nazi Holocaust yesterday with either cautious misgiving or outright dismay.

In a brief 10-page document the Vatican expresses regret and "deep sorrow" for the actions of some Roman Catholics during the second world war. But while claiming it is an "act of repentance", the statement does not include any apology for Church leaders who failed to speak out against Hitler and his allies.

Long passages of the text smack of self-justification. It mounts a spirited defence of Pius XII, whose wartime silence has long been the subject of controversy, and disavows any responsibility for the Nazis' racist thinking.

Israel's chief rabbi, Meir Lau, said he had expected an unequivocal apology from the Vatican for Pius XII's "shameful attitude". In a statement issued before the document appeared, Rabbi Lau, a Holocaust survivor, said: "There is no doubt that a clear condemnation from the Vatican at the time could have prevented the terrible things that were done."

Pius XII's defenders have argued he opted for "quiet diplomacy" so as not to endanger Catholics in Nazi-occupied Europe. Yesterday's document recalls that, in his first encyclical, in 1939, the pope warned against theories which denied the unity of the human race. It adds that the "wisdom of Pope Pius's diplomacy" has been acknowledged by numerous Jewish groups.

Entitled *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*, the document took more than 10

years to produce. Its preparation has been followed closely by Pope John Paul II, who wrote a preface to its main form of a letter to its main author, the Australian cardinal Edward Cassidy.

Sir Sigmund Sternberg, of the International Council of Christians and Jews, said: "Jews everywhere will share the Pope's hope that today's Vatican document will help heal the wounds of past misunderstandings and injustices." But he added: "I am sure that the last word has not been said on the silence of those in the Church who knew well what was happening to the Jewish people and raised neither their voices nor their hands in aid or comfort."

The document lists senior clerics who took a stand against the Nazis, but not those who actively collaborated. Nor does the text answer allegations that the Catholic Church backed the



Cardinal Edward Cassidy presents the Holocaust document

vicious pro-Nazi puppet government in Croatia or that clerics in Rome helped SS officers and others to flee to Latin America after the war.

It says: "We cannot know how many Christians in countries occupied or ruled by the Nazi powers or their allies were horrified at the disappearance of their Jewish neighbours and yet were not strong enough to raise their voices in protest. For Christians, this heavy burden of conscience of their brothers

and sisters during the second world war must be a call to penitence. We deeply regret the errors and failures of those sons and daughters of the Church."

Many Jews will be appalled by the document's insistence that Nazi anti-Semitism "had its roots outside Christianity". It stresses that Catholicism always preached "the equal dignity of all races and peoples" and that Nazi ideology was pagan.

But it does not address the widely held view that Hitler's anti-Semitism grew out of almost a century of racist thinking and science, much of it the work of Catholics. The statement asks: "Did anti-Jewish sentiment among Christians make them less sensitive, or even indifferent, to the persecutions launched against the Jews by National Socialism when it reached power?" It nowhere provides an answer.

Israel raises stakes over Cook visit

Ian Black in Amman

ISRAELI anger at Robin Cook's visit to the East Jerusalem settlement of Har Homa today reflects its instinctive opposition to a role for Britain and its European partners in the difficult business of making peace between Arabs and Jews.

"We are determined that we will be part of the peace process," the Foreign Secretary said after talks in Cairo. "Israel understands that."

Before last night's compromise deal, Israel had mounted a high-profile diplomatic and media campaign against a visit which will probably occupy less than 15 minutes in a crowded day of talks in Jerusalem, Gaza and Tel Aviv.

Early signs of a row began to appear last Friday when the Israeli foreign ministry warned Britain that Mr Cook's plans to visit the controversial site would set back relations with the European Union.

Only days before, Tony Blair and his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, had held a friendly meeting, despite Mr Netanyahu's repeated insistence that former European colonial powers "understood nothing" about the Middle East.

British officials said yesterday that Mr Netanyahu had been strikingly concerned to improve his relations with the EU and had simply been playing to a right-wing gallery by raising the stakes so publicly over today's Jerusalem visit.



Britain's Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook (right), and Egypt's Amr Moussa field reporters' questions in Cairo yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: LELA GORCHEV

The Foreign Office insisted that Israel had known about the plan for at least 10 days and that it was legitimate to underline Britain's well-known opposition to settlements in occupied territories.

The Foreign Secretary's trip was twice postponed in the autumn, annoying Arabs who accused the British government of double standards for talking tough about Saddam Hussein but not paying enough attention to the deepening crisis in the Middle East peace process.

Arab states and Palestinians also hoped that the EU, already bankrolling the 1993 Oslo peace accords, would take a more prominent role and act as a counterweight to the United States, which is seen as favouring the Jewish state.

Once Britain assumed the EU's rotating presidency in

January it was just a question of dates. Mr Cook's busy schedule meant that to avoid snubbing anyone he had to cram six countries, including the Palestinian territories, into three days.

He arrived in Cairo yesterday, flew on to Amman, is in Jerusalem and Gaza today

"Israel understands we are determined to be part of the peace process"

and will travel to Damascus and Beirut tomorrow.

International objections to Har Homa are not new: the start of preparatory work at the settlement last March was a grave blow to the peace pro-

cess; just weeks after Israel finally redeployed troops from the West Bank town of Hebron.

Israel chose the site to complete the ring of Jewish settlements around East Jerusalem and cut off contact between the Arab side of the city and its hinterland in the West Bank — a classic Zionist ploy of "creating facts" on the ground to pre-empt negotiation.

Jerusalem, the most sensitive unresolved issue, has been left until the final stage of the Oslo peace process. Israel sees the city as its "united and eternal capital", while Palestinians see East Jerusalem as the capital of a future independent state of their own.

Privately the British were pinning the blame for the fuss on the Israelis. "It's more their problem than ours,"

said one source. "It's the problems in Netanyahu's coalition that mean he has to act in ways that make him look tougher."

"We can't be seen to be accommodating the Israeli right. We have to accommodate the Israeli people — and they certainly want to make

The problems in Netanyahu's coalition mean he has to act tough"

progress with the peace process."

Mr Cook said: "The position we take on the expansion of settlements is long-standing and well-known to Israel. Not only Britain but all the

countries of the European Union have opposed expansion in occupied areas. That is also the position on which we are standing shoulder to shoulder with the US."

There is certainly no question of exceeding the EU's brief. At an informal meeting of foreign ministers in Edinburgh at the weekend, all 14 of Mr Cook's European counterparts gave firm backing to his plans. He is accompanied throughout this trip by a Spanish diplomat, Miguel Moratinos, the EU's special envoy on the peace process.

Britain may even privately welcome the controversy if it shows Mr Cook standing firm on an issue of principle at a time when he is sensitive about being identified too closely with the US — although Washington has also asked Israel for a "time out" on settlements.

Brown envelopes for young Russia

James Meek in Moscow

THEY ARE young, they are beautiful, they are full of hope — and untainted by 80 years of doleful, blustered Soviet propaganda. The new generation of cola-drinking, gun-chewing, liberated Russian youth, raised when communism was already dying, has something to say in its first eager steps into the world of work: "Show me the money."

In a discreet brown envelope, preferably, the latest annual survey of social attitudes among young Russians, to be released in Moscow today, reports that more than half of all 17-year-olds see nothing wrong with looking for a job where they stand a chance of being bribed. Nine per cent said they would be actively looking for something in that line.

Showing an instinctive grasp of market relations in a transitional economy, 65 per cent said they would marry for money and 28 per cent that they would consent to paid sex.

Almost half of those surveyed said they believed it was acceptable to take what you wanted by force.

Professor Boris Ruchkin, head of the Russian Institute of Youth's research centre, admitted the figures were worrying, but said they should be seen in the context of a generation which, for the first time in Russia, accepted liberty as normal. "Young people are better adapted to the conditions of a market economy," he said. "They don't want to return to the past."

They want cash — 57 per cent said money was the most important thing in their life. Of all today's desirable careers, only that of lawyer — much more lucrative than 10 years ago — emerged from Soviet times. Young Russians want to be — in descending order — manager of a commercial bank, management executive, bodyguard and mafia boss. The survey questioned 3,839 people in three age groups — 17, 24 and 30 — across Russia.

The report noted that in reality many youngsters were likely to end up in one of three of Russia's fastest-growing new businesses — among the 10 million small traders, the 430,000 security guards or the 400,000 workers in the gambling industry.

Le Pen's extremists gain and Gaullists lose in regional polls

Paul Webster in Paris

THE extremist National Front came close to beating the Gaullist RPR in Sunday's French regional elections.

Jean-Marie Le Pen's extreme-right group is now the biggest single party in the Marseille region, where it has consolidated its power base. There was gloom in the Gaullist and centre-right UDF movements yesterday at the loss of 10 of the 22 regions at stake to the leftwing coalition of Socialists, Communists and Greens. The coalition's victories, despite the extremist surge, included the Provence-Côte d'Azur region around Marseille and the Paris-based Ile de France. The left also kept the two regions it had held since the last vote in 1992.

Nationally, Gaullists won 285 seats, their UDF partners 262 and the National Front 275. Socialists won 396 seats, Communists 147 and Greens 88.

The confidence shown in Lionel Jospin's Socialist-led government was less significant for President Jacques Chirac and his conservative allies than the creeping advance of Mr Le Pen's anti-immigration movement.

While the National Front lost a seat in Paris, it took 37 in Marseille — the same number as the RPR and UDF combined and 11 more than the Socialists without their coalition partners.

In three of the six départements or counties that make up the eastern Mediterranean

region, the National Front took more than a quarter of votes. But the biggest humiliation for the orthodox right was in the Var around Toulon, where Philippe Létour, the former defence minister who leads the UDF, was beaten into third place. The National Front scored 28 per cent, one point less than the combined left.

Like the Gaullists, Mr Létour's movement was told to refuse alliances with Mr Le Pen's extremists who will hold the balance of power in several of the 22 regions when councillors choose their chairmen on Friday.

Mr Le Pen and his deputy, Bruno Mégret, both threw their energies into the Mar-

seille campaign. The high racist vote in its industrial suburbs was matched by strong showings in urban areas around Lille, Strasbourg and Paris. Voters responded strongly to a National Front call for the expulsion of immigrants and the exclusion of new settlers from family and housing allowances.

The confidence expressed in Mr Jospin's nine-month-

National Front successes

National Front scores in Sunday's regional elections in France. Figures in brackets are its results in 1992

Total NF vote: 3.3 million (Percentage 15.27 (13.26))
Total seats: 275 (239)

Rightwing comparisons in seats:
RPR 285 (318)
UDF 262 (305)

Leftwing comparisons in seats:
Socialists 396 (318)
Communists 147 (115)
Greens 88 (106)

World news in brief

Immigrants feared drowned off Gibraltar

UP TO 12 illegal immigrants from north Africa were missing and feared dead yesterday after their boat sank during an attempt to cross the Strait of Gibraltar to Spain.

Officials said 17 others were rescued after the boat capsized in high seas about two miles from the Spanish port of Tarifa. Ships and helicopters were searching the area yesterday for between 10 and 12 people still missing. The survivors received medical treatment in Tarifa. — Reuters, Madrid.

Charges over 'JFK fraud'

PAPERS proving President John F. Kennedy had an affair with Marilyn Monroe were part of a multi-million-dollar fraud committed by a document dealer, US prosecutors allege.

Lawrence Cusack was charged with fraud yesterday and could face five years in prison and a big fine if found guilty of selling forged documents. Among the suspect papers were the JFK documents, which allegedly showed that the president had bought Monroe's silence by setting up a trust for her mother, as well as a signed copy of Monroe's will and a document handwritten by Kennedy. — AP, New York.

Virus kills Icelandic ponies

A DEADLY virus spreading through Iceland's native pony population has baffled scientists.

Two ponies have died and another two infected ponies were destroyed. Scientists have been unable to identify the virus. "The transmission of the virus is puzzling, too," a researcher said. "It seems to affect horses outdoors without direct physical contact but we don't know whether it is carried by the wind, birds or something else." — Reuters, Reykjavik.

Mein Kampf CD banned

A CONTROVERSIAL CD recording of Hitler's *Mein Kampf* by a relative of Bertolt Brecht was banned in Germany yesterday on the grounds that it could encourage extreme rightwingers.

The state government of Bavaria, which controls the rights to Hitler's work, said the fact that the text was read by Ekkehard Schall, a leftwing actor who is Brecht's son-in-law, was not enough to prevent neo-Nazis from buying and distributing the recording. — Denis Staunton, Berlin.

Channel oil-spill anniversary

TWO DEEP-SEA tugs were on 24-hour permanent standby in Brest and Cherbourg yesterday, the most visible signs of the safety measures taken since the 233,000-ton British-freighted oil tanker Amoco Cadiz sank 20 years ago, causing the Channel's worst oil spill.

The 90 Breton villages polluted by oil along a 190-mile stretch of rocky coastline around Pornic made no attempt to commemorate the anniversary of a maritime disaster that damaged holiday beaches for months and killed 400,000 tons of marine animals and birds. It was only after a 14-year court battle that the US owners of the Spanish-built ship were forced by a US court to pay about £120 million in compensation. — Paul Webster, Paris.

Getty caught short

THE \$1 billion (£700 million) Getty art museum which opened recently in Los Angeles has failed in one important human aspect — it has an acute shortage of lavatories.

While the six-building complex took 14 years to complete, the two main buildings housing paintings and sculptures contain no lavatories at all, and another pavilion has only one for women with four stalls. With between 5,000 and 6,000 people a day there are already queues, and bigger crowds are expected in summer.

The museum must now choose between cutting the gallery space or building an extension to provide room for more toilet facilities. — Christopher Reed, Los Angeles.

Armenians go to polls

ARMENIANS voted for a new president yesterday in a closely scrutinised election which they hope will go some way to restoring the former Soviet republic's democratic image.

Karen Demirchyan, the Soviet-era communist leader, led in most opinion polls before the vote, ahead of the prime minister, Robert Kocharyan, the acting president, and the former prime minister, Vazgen Manukyan. Results are expected to be announced today.

The result of the vote in Armenia, a poor but strategically important republic of nearly 4 million people, will be watched across the region and beyond, not least because of oil riches in the nearby Caspian Sea basin. — Reuters, Yerevan.

Red tape fuels Amazon fire

THE worst fire ever in the Amazon region will be fought with only two helicopters after a federal envoy refused to ask for the release of funds already approved to help battle the blaze.

A federal team led by the envoy Carlos Franca flew over the remote Amazon state of Roraima, where fires fuelled by strong winds and the worst drought for 30 years have devastated about a quarter of its area since mid-January.

The state governor, Neudo Campos, has repeatedly asked President Fernando Henrique Cardoso to release the \$2.4 million already approved to rent 22 Russian and American firefighting helicopters, but Mr Franca says the operation is too costly and that the government would instead send two firefighting helicopters. — AP, Rio de Janeiro.

Pilots can have babies

WOMEN in the military are now allowed to become pregnant, the Malaysian defence department has ruled, a newspaper reported yesterday.

The defence minister, Syed Hamid Albar, said the Royal Malaysian Air Force would no longer impose restrictions on women pilots and flight attendants who get pregnant after earning their wings, the Star newspaper said.

Mr Syed said a ruling forbidding attendants on air force flights from getting pregnant for three years would be lifted from the air from getting pregnant after qualifying as pilots would not be adopted. "There will be no discrimination against women pilots," he said. — AP, Kuala Lumpur.

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Matthew Norman

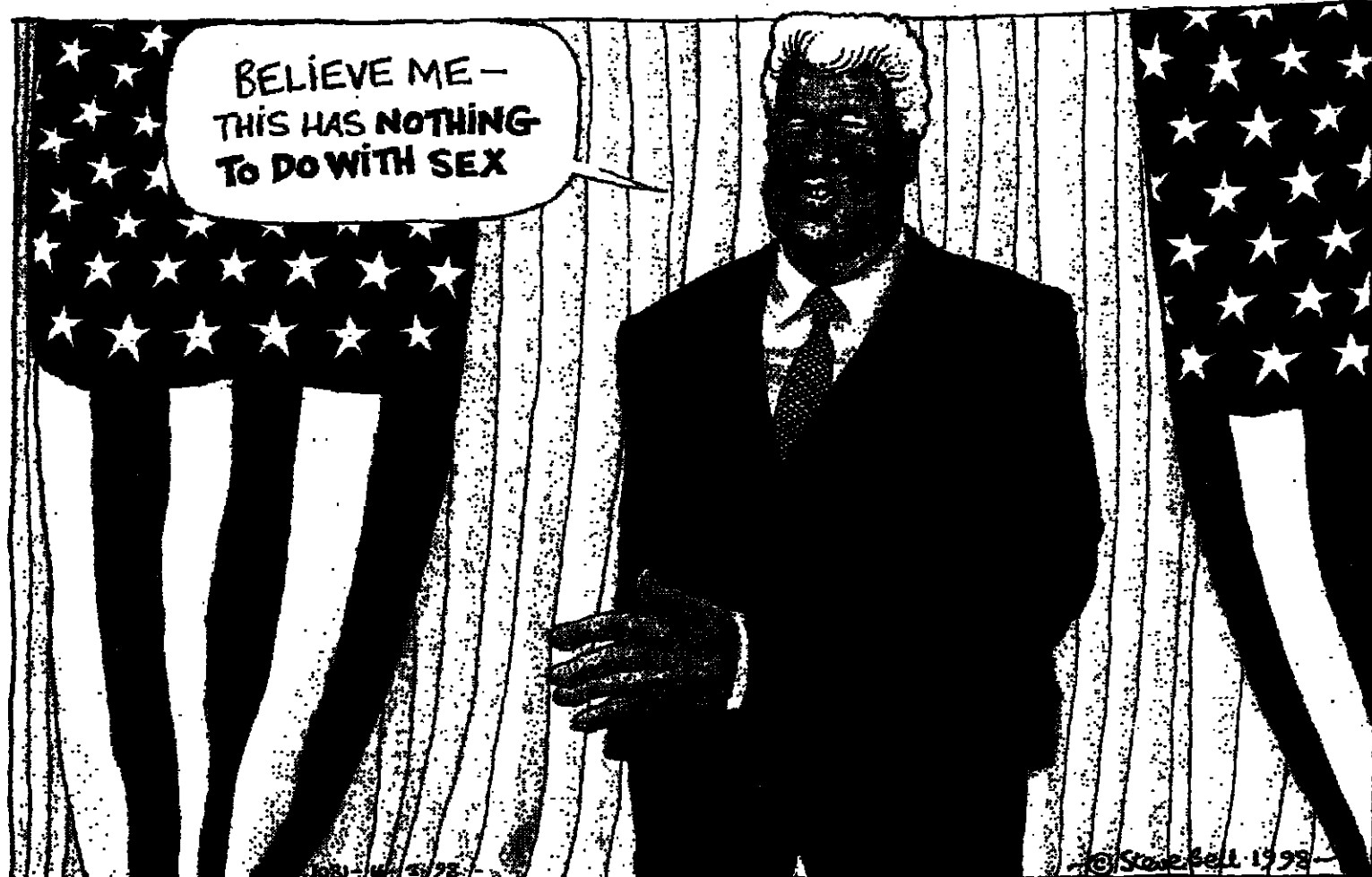
AFTER spending the last year moaning about being too skint to buy newspapers, TV's the Hamiltons have found respite from their money worries with a holiday in that pauper's paradise, the Caribbean. As is their wont with foreign travel, they did not pay themselves (how could they?), allowing my old friend Lord Harris of High Cross — the pipe-smoking peer raising £150,000 to enable Neil to sue Mohammed Al Fayed for libel — to pick up the tab. "Oh come on, that's ridiculous," he said, when we rang to enquire about the trip's funding. "I'll say nothing to you at all. It's all quite innocent." The Diary is also notorious for its shameless acceptance of freebies, so we were on the verge of asking the noble Lord if he might send us to the West Indies too when he put the phone down. Philanthropy is a wonderful thing — and Harris is truly the Lord Shaftesbury of the age — but that cannot excuse bad manners. Poor show.

THE spring edition of *in Touch*, newsletter of the Westminster council Tories, is out, and the subject is the council tax. "Conservatives do it again," boasts the front page. "Conservatives looking after your money." So they are. One recipient calls to say he was so eager to read the good news that he happily coughed up the unpaid postage.

THE quest to raise interest in Andrew Smith, the once obscure employment minister now rapidly mutating into a cult figure, exploded in life, and my postbag is in danger of doing itself an injury. Elizabeth Calton writes from Oxford, warmly praising Smith, her local MP, and describing the "snide comments" in this column as "disgraceful." Although an old friend of his, Martin Stott is not irked — he reports that Andrew and his wife Val organised a tour of the House for his two daughters, including "a trip up on to the roof. Thoughtful and quite wacky really." Smithie fan G Thomas is "On the evidence, he is working harder and more effectively than you are." (I certainly hope so). "PS. Is your column of any use at all?" Absolutely none, Mr. Thomas. Not one iota. More on Smithie tomorrow from the column you can safely ignore.

LAATEST contender for the Drolliest Press Release award is Jackie Cooper PR. They have sent the Diary a document announcing the beginning of National Prune Week, which is to be promoted this year, with a glamorous roadshow, California Prunes, we learn, are low fat, high energy, impotency-curing (really?) aphrodisiac little marvels. Delicately skirting the one quality for which the prune is so well loved — a most irregular omission — Jackie Cooper PR win their nomination for condensing so much important and valuable detail into a 16 page press pack.

MODERN crime-fighting techniques fail to deter one of Britain's brightest villains. While visiting South Norwood nick recently, the man was told that he would have to give a DNA sample either from his mouth or his head. He rejected the sergeant's advice that saliva was less troublesome, arguing that if he were to spit at the scene of a future crime, he would leave the evidence behind. By giving up a hair, however, he would confound future investigations, he explained, since "when I get home, I'm going to shave my head." Professor Moriarty would be proud.



Blair tolerates Brown's disdain for a reason: he's indispensable

Hugo Young



GORDON Brown, although he is Chancellor of the Exchequer, seldom turns up at meetings dependent on his colleagues. Except at meetings of the Cabinet, his adviser, Ed Balls, is invariably in attendance. At the Cabinet committee on welfare reform, he brings two advisers, Mr Balls and Ed Milliband, to discussions where most of his colleagues come along. It is a symbol of his separatism, that he should arrive with this intellectual bodyguard, and it is not the only one.

During the meetings of this committee, the Chancellor spends as much time being whispered to by Mr Balls as he does listening to his ministerial colleagues. He makes his own pitch, and then retreats into ostentatious conversation with his advisers while other ministers say their piece. He seems to be fundamentally uninterested in what they have to say, harbouring disdain for their ignorance, whether this concerns the public spending for which they are responsible, or their reluctance to surrender into his hands the entire corpus of welfare reform.

Not surprisingly, these feelings are returned. Even Harriet Harman, in part a Brownite, is ready for a fight. The Treasury has persistently refused to work with her department on some of the key reform issues. The turf war is getting venomous. All spending ministers know that their relations with the Chancellor will be at times abrasive, but none likes being treated with contempt, and whether you inquire at Education, at Culture, at the Home Office, at Social Security, not to mention the environs of the Deputy Prime Minister, you find a serious absence of trust. Gordon is im-

possible to work with: they say. He would be a wonderful member of the Government, if only he would join it.

For the other side of Mr Brown is that he is, indeed, wonderful. He has a high seriousness about politics it has been given to few Chancellors, of either party, to exercise. Every Labour Chancellor of the past 35 years had his back against the economic wall, and every one served the same political master, Harold Wilson. Stringency and faction were the conditions of their existence. Gordon Brown inherited economic stability, and is installed alongside a Prime Minister who is as un-ambiguously uninterested in what he has to say, as Brown is in what he has to say.

Chancellor and Prime Minister, moreover, have worked together on the Budget. It is Brown's Budget, and will express the constructive fascination with tax and welfare and work which he has developed, at a strategic level, over the past five years. But everything has been checked out with No 10 along the way. There were orderly, swift bilateral meetings, at which the ghastly memory of last autumn, when reckless Treasury unreasonism over the future of the euro all but destroyed Labour's and London's credibility, has been excised. At this level of his work, coming to a head today, the Chancellor has behaved impeccably, and may well be about to perform magnificently.

But the problem of his hubris remains deeply mystifying. He's as powerful as any Chancellor for 50 years, probably more so. His range is cap-

acious, his freedom large, his understanding deep, his agenda extensive, his opportunity durable. Unlike every Tory Chancellor, even in the assured Thatcher years, serious policy friction with his boss is minimal. Unlike them, also, he does not have to struggle for ascendancy. He broods over the entire scene, with the kind of freedom that only a strong Prime Minister could give him.

For Mr Blair, let's be clear, is very strong. One of Brown's gripes is that Blair took the chairmanship of the welfare reform committee. The self-generous sulking, in company with his private gang, is partly a complaint that he is not in charge. The chairman controls the minutes; also, it would seem, the leaks. There have been no leaks from the welfare reform committee, a fact which some construe as showing that the Chancellor is not yet getting what he wants. Though work incentives, mirrored in the working families tax credit, will be a Budget centrepiece, the big stuff on future pensions is a long way from settled, and the Prime Minister is showing that this won't be Gordon Brown's solo call.

MR BLAIR is also doing something else. This is the unprecedented oddity of their personal situation. Instead of seeing the Chancellor as a menace who needs cutting down to size, which most of his predecessors would have done, the Prime Minister treats him more as if he were his therapist. He soothes and persuades, rather than cajoling or complaining — even, except lightly, about the power-hungry biography which Brown's people had a major hand in getting into the public

realm in January. He understands Gordon's feelings, especially about the leadership he failed to win four years ago. He is endlessly patient in suppressing the irritation he cannot help but feel concerning the Chancellor's ambition for a large private fiefdom, and the energy, not to say money, he expends in maintaining a personal political base.

The fact is that Mr Brown is indispensable. The man who rises at the Despatch Box today to deliver his first full-scale Budget is at the height of his considerable powers. This is what he came into politics to do, only a rung below what he really wants. For most men it would be satisfaction enough, pending the next turn of the wheel. But for this Chancellor, it isn't. In their different ways, three immensely able Scottish politicians, named Irvine, Cook and Brown, are each acquiring an individual notoriety which seems to sit at odds with the New Labour project, and the greatest of these is Brown.

The strangeness of this is how little it has to do with policy or ideas. The essence of it is personal positioning: who shall be in charge, and who take the credit, when the reform of Britain has advanced far enough to be assessed? There can be only one answer to that question. Personal rivalry is always a motor of high politics, but at times it looks absurd and is disabling. This is such a time. Mr Blair may infuriate his old friend by his dancing lightness, his deft manoeuvring, and even by his refusal to associate what they're both engaged in with a particle of the language of socialism. But Blair it was who won, and he who, if he chose, could always give Brown a lesson in disdain.

Porn in the trolley

Ros Coward



THE FOOD industry has been "shaken to the root" by the BSE crisis, but what about its branches? We know about the problems of intensive agriculture and the use of pesticides, but what about the retail industry, which may well be equally culpable in the whole sorry state of our food demands and supplies?

There can be few people in this country without meat and fruit rotting in their fridges. If you do a supermarket shop once a week, it's impossible to accurately calculate needs. You get tempted by extras, buy chilled unripe fruit which rots unpredictably, or fall for the dreaded "three for the price of two." But this routine waste of food? Supermarkets are temples dedicated not to satisfying needs but stimulating desires. Gone are the days of plainly packaged food "piled high and sold cheap." Today's giants are aesthetic and sensual pornographers. They package fruit and veg like gifts, arrange them like the cornucopias of the old masters, pipe the smell of freshly baking bread into the entrance, and provide cafes and creches to keep us there. Complicated loyalty and reward schemes perform the ultimate con, convincing consumers the more they buy, the more they get back.

Supermarkets create expectations around the quality and supply of food, encouraging the worst excesses of food production. Stimulating demand for particular "standards" of food, like fat-free pork, they foster the conditions for crises in the food chain. After BSE, they have started to listen to the much derided food campaigners of old.

But typically supermarkets respond to one criticism but ignore another. Like the "Food Miles" campaign which highlights the cost to the environment of transporting food for long distances. When the Women's Environmental Network campaigned for supermarkets to increase the amount of local produce, Sainsbury's listened attentively and then suggested, bizarrely, that WEN should do the marketing for a campaign around local produce. This suggests a naive conviction that society only consists of marketers and marketing opportunities. No wonder WEN are currently pursuing more straightforward ways of "re-localising" food supplies, yesterday co-hosting a conference to encourage Farmer's Markets, where farmers can sell produce directly in their own locality.

Meanwhile supermarkets have only increased the amount of labels showing the

origin of British regional food purchasing and distribution networks remain unchanged. They buy produce wherever it's cheapest, transport it as cheaply as possible, then to another place for packaging, another for centralised distribution and finally transport it to individual outlets. The system is heavily reliant on motorways, locked into monocultures and CAP policies. Managers are not trained to buy and promote local produce. It's hard to believe this is ignorance. The phoney reproductions of old fashioned butchers and bakers — straw boaters, awnings and all — is evidence of bad conscience about the way local food supplies used to be organised.

Supermarkets advertise themselves as "guardians of cost and quality" simply catering to public demand for low prices, wide variety and standardised quality. Nothing could be further from the truth. They determine the interaction around food supply and distribution in a society where, unlike much of Europe, there is no real contact between producer and consumer. Supermarkets decide what we buy and where it comes from. They could influence the ethics and practices of their suppliers, but refuse this responsibility, denying their shape demand or influence the market. Instead they blame penny pinching consumers, and "greedy farmers".

Yet they are no strangers to social engineering when it suits them. So veg like gifts, arrange them like the cornucopias of the old masters, pipe the smell of freshly baking bread into the entrance, and provide cafes and creches to keep us there. Complicated loyalty and reward schemes perform the ultimate con, convincing consumers the more they buy, the more they get back.

Supermarkets encourage the worst excesses of food production

role in destroying communities, they want to salvage them in order to buy their future loyalty.

They have vast budgets for political lobbying and play the game astutely. Labour in opposition agreed with John Gummer that out-of-town developments have disastrous consequences for high streets, encourage new green field developments and increase reliance on traffic. Now, in government, Labour opposes such developments "except where appropriate". A rumoured donation of several million from David Sainsbury may have softened this policy.

It is time this new baronial class is seen for what they are and called to account for the totality of their actions. Supermarkets are an anti-social phenomenon, sitting in the centre of a web of social problems: transport, health, environment, economic and social dislocation. They are surely more deserving of a coherent policy to deal with them than the current single targets — smoking, single mothers and the supposedly work-shy.

A down-turn in the world economy might spell the collapse of Blairism

Global cooling

John Gray

ARE WE nearing the end of the global free market? The question seems absurd. Worldwide mobility of capital and production is less than a decade old. Yet politicians in all parties expect the current regime of global laissez-faire to last forever. Over the coming years that orthodoxy is likely to be confounded, as the aftershock of the Asian crisis and the close of America's long boom return the world to a type of capitalism more volatile than any it has known since the Twenties.

The Blair government has embraced the global market in the faith that it is here to stay. The government is right in its belief that changes in the world economy have made traditional forms of social democracy unworkable. Globalisation

— the rapid spread of new technologies throughout the world — makes policies that aim for full employment through job protection self-defeating. What globalisation does is not so much increase the number of jobs we have in a working lifetime. It continuously wipes out entire occupations. Unceasing technical innovation has plunged the division of labour in society into a flux that will be with us from here on. This is a lesson that most European social democrats have yet to learn.

But it is a mistake to think that globalisation means a worldwide free market. Today's regime is likely to be a brief episode in the evolution of the world economy. It is too potentially unstable to last for long. Either it will be reformed by new policies of regulation or else it will break up as its impact on social cohesion becomes insupportable. The drama that

is unfolding in Indonesia is probably the first of several in which unregulated currency markets trigger economic collapses and political upheavals which neither the IMF nor anyone else can hope to control.

Global markets are powerful engines of wealth cre-

When recession comes it could knock Labour violently off course

ation. But when left to themselves they are forces that work against social cohesion. Centre-left governments in Britain, the US and some European countries have taken over from the Thatcherite period a naive faith in the benignity of unregulated market forces. It

is striking that this faith is not shared by those with intimate knowledge of how global markets actually work. The immensely successful investor George Soros has declared that unmanaged markets — especially financial markets — are chronically prone to cycles of unsustainable boom and devastating bust. Now that many markets are globally interconnected these instabilities are more likely to have worldwide repercussions.

The Blair government could be knocked violently off course if, when recession comes, it is sharper, deeper or longer than expected. A good deal in the government's strategy depends on the next turn in the economic cycle. At times it seems that the government has bought into the Clintonite conviction, inherited from the Reagan era, that the business cycle is now

merely history. If that confidence proves mistaken over the next few years, it is not only public finances that will be thrown into disarray. What will become of welfare-to-work when unemployment figures are once again rising each month? How will voters

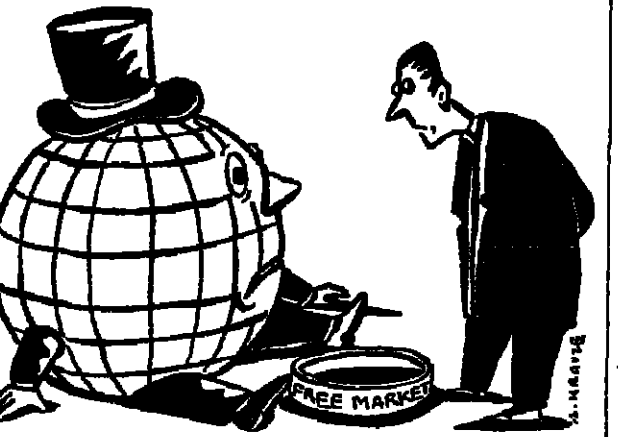
react to large reforms of the welfare state when disturbances in world markets threaten their security?

Many in Asia believe that it is time to consider a new system of fixed or semi-fixed exchange rates so as to limit opportunities for currency speculation. In the US, Pro-

fessor James Tobin has proposed a tax on such speculative transactions. A number of countries are looking at the experiences of China and Chile, which have retained controls on capital flows and thereby protected themselves from recent market turmoil.

Global laissez-faire today is likely to prove no more enduring than unmanaged free markets between the two world wars. It was partly a misplaced faith that free markets are self-stabilising that caused the economic collapses and political convulsions of the Thirties. Do we have to suffer a major dislocation in the world economy before we accept that laissez-faire is not a sensible way to regulate global markets?

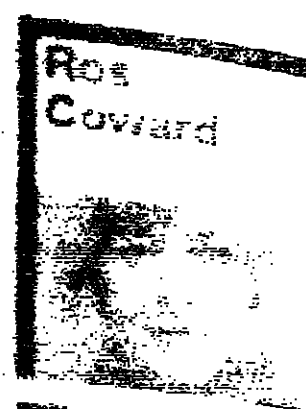
Professor John Gray's book, *False Dawn: The Delusions Of Global Capitalism*, is published by Granta this month.



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Porn in
the trolley



A pattern of harassment

That's the real problem

IT IS BILL Clinton's word now against that of Kathleen Willey: two versions of the same event as incompatible as the tales by rival witnesses to a murder in the classic Kurosawa film *Rashomon*. Now that Ms Willey has appeared on CBS television to tell her story at length, we have become, reluctantly or otherwise, the audience which is invited to come to a judgment. One of them must be lying — but which one?

The dispassionate answer to this proposition is (a) that we have no way of telling, and (b) that it is none of our business. It is, as Mr Clinton's lawyer pointed out yesterday, his word against hers. If it comes to a court it will be decided by a jury. Yet if it does not? Ms Willey's interview, recounting in great detail her claim that the president groped her and has since lied about it under oath, will rest in the public domain even if there is no judicial follow-up. Some aspects of yesterday's media coverage already imply that this is a charge of greater seriousness, and therefore perhaps credibility, than any of the others made about Mr Clinton's personal life. The jury of public opinion, however ill, or only partially informed it may be, is already busily engaged with the case.

It is also increasingly hard to contemplate Mr Clinton's activities as president of the US in isolation from the charges which continue to swirl around him — and even harder for him. The Monica Lewinsky revelations distracted vital attention from a visit by Yasser Arafat: who now is going to take much notice of any presidential move

on Northern Ireland as all the participants, from Mo Mowlam to Gerry Adams, gather today in the White House for St Patrick's Day? Mr Clinton, whether or not by coincidence, is about to embark upon a huge swathe of high-profile activity, with foreign visits from Africa to India, over the next few months which should go some way to rebuilding the substance attached to the job of running the world's only super-power (and, in some measure, the world).

But the case of Ms Willey now seems likely to chip insidiously at the foundations. This is less because her story is much more convincing than those of other women who have made allegations against the president than because of who she is: a mature person, a reluctant witness, a Democratic fundraiser unconnected with any hostile political forces. This does not mean that there are no questions arising from her account. The events which she now alleges took place occurred on the very same day that her husband committed suicide (though she was unaware of this at the time). Could such a tragic experience have coloured her recollection of what was, by both accounts, an emotional meeting with the president? There is the puzzling story about a previous proposition made by Mr Clinton to her which, if it happened as she describes, might perhaps have made her more cautious about approaching him. There is the question of Ms Willey's willingness to continue working in the White House.

Yet we should remember that if this is a case of sexual harassment — and according to her account that is exactly what it is — it may be inappropriate to make instant assumptions about how the victim should or should not behave, particularly when the harasser in question happens to be the President of the United States.

All of this has to be set in the context of an accumulation of charges against Mr Clinton which acquire more weight by their number. It goes beyond a question of private consensual behaviour to raise the image of a pattern of harassment by Mr Clinton in which preponderant power may have been used to claim sexual favours. That is why, in the end, there is a legitimate public interest in these allegations.

More on Four

Boyle's law seems to work

WE British are creatures of habit. Certain customs have stayed the way they are for years, fixed points we can all rely on. Like Radio 4, for example. There is a section of the British middle class which uses the station as a soundtrack for life: awake to the Today programme, lunch with the Archers, a bath with the World Tonight, a faraway reverie to the Shipping Forecast before finally Sailing By into sleep. For those not part of this Radio 4 flock, all this is probably hard to understand. But radio is an intimate medium — just you and the voice — and somehow its rhythms get under the skin.

So this was the challenge that faced James Boyle, the Radio 4 controller who yesterday unveiled the new sound for the station. He had to tread carefully; for some, his work was equivalent to tampering with the nation's body clock. And yet he has come through, mainly with plaudits. The politicians should take a look at the 12-month process of review, consultation and final decision undertaken by Mr Boyle — it might serve as a useful lesson in making a change. By travelling the country, addressing public meetings — often sparsely

attended — the controller managed to neutralise the feedback crowd: the hardcore Radio 4 devotees prone to complain at even the slightest tinkering with the schedule. Taking along the Breakfast TV presenter Justin Webb, something of a middle Britain pin-up, was equally inspired. Between them they won over the tiny, but vocal group which has so often blocked past BBC efforts at reform.

No one can say the exercise has been cut-driven: Radio 4's budget is to increase by £2 million. Nor is there much evidence of the dreaded "dumbing down": Mark Lawson's *Front Row* is bound to be as high-brow as *Kaleidoscope*, and Melvyn Bragg will keep on chairing brainy chat on *Start the Week*. Michael Buerk grilling a guest over an ethical dilemma will be a welcome break from the recent noise of the Moral Maze, and Martin Bashir should bring a different view of sport. MPs are sad that yesterday in Parliament is shifting to long wave but, as we have argued before, if Westminster has become a minority interest that is the fault of politicians as much as anyone else. Mr Boyle should stand by his new line-up: it serves as a lesson that, for all our entrenched habits, we can sometimes make a change — and like it.

Hall of shame

The response is a red card

THE HORRIFIED reaction of Newcastle fans outside St James Park yesterday said it all. They were angry at being exploited in the club shop through inflated prices for team shirts, at the turnstiles through high charges and now — if allegations in the Sunday papers are true — by two leading members of the board of directors who

seemed to treat everything about Newcastle — except their own journeys through the flesh pots of Europe — with scarcely concealed contempt. According to the accusations, they claimed to have sold Andy Cole to Manchester United knowing he had a serious knee injury, sacked Kevin Keegan for spending too much and winning nothing (a story at odds with what was said when Newcastle was planning to go public, boasted about buying replica shirts in Asia at £5 a go and selling them at £49.99 and referring to Newcastle girls as "all dogs").

Chairman Freddie Shepherd and vice-chairman Douglas Hall (who are the two directors involved) have offended practically everyone. The way they do business is hardly likely to appear in any code of best corporate governance and certainly not in the Harvard Business Review. The directors may have a complete answer to these allegations. We hope they have. Otherwise players and fans will be rightly outraged to hear what two of their bosses think about them. They will probably be eaten alive if they have the nerve to show their faces at the ground in the near future.

It is conceivable that in other circumstances they might have got away with this in the City, where falls in morality are sometimes forgiven by compensating rises in the FT index. But their alleged misdemeanours have coincided with a sharp drop in Newcastle's share price. Punters have nothing to fall back on. The shares have slumped from 135p last April, when the company was floated on the stock exchange, to only 85p yesterday — while share prices in general have risen strongly as the bull market rages on. In these circumstances, they should do what any self-respecting footballer would do: leave the field immediately even before the inevitable red card is waved in the air.

Letters to the Editor

Tests, in class and on the pitch

I AM 11 years old and am doing my SATs test from May 11-15. I am writing to you to give a public complaint that already we have studied for six weeks roughly. We have gone through things that we have done at least three times (eg sound, light and electricity). I think we should be learning new things instead, like history, which is just as important as maths but not in the test. It does not do any harm to our career, it only tests the teachers and, if you get good marks, makes the school look good. So why do we have to be put through all this pressure? Rosie Sherwood, London.

FAT-cat lawyers are not popular, but how surprising that the English Cricket Board decided to use the services of a journalist, Matthew Engel, instead of hiring a lawyer to defend themselves (Lords: what have they got to hide? March 13). Michael Jolly, London.

CAN tell Matthew Engel that there is at least one office in the country where men do not discuss whether or not their female colleagues have or have not ever had a shag. It's mine and if they did they would be out very quickly. A C Clarke, Coalville, Leicestershire.

DAVID Lacey must be the only person who thought the Manchester United-Arsenal match was brought forward to 11.15am so Manchester players could rest up for Europe (United wounded by loss of Schmeichel, Sport March 16). It was because Sky wanted to televise it. The Premiership doesn't run itself for Manchester United's benefit. Ed Crick, London.

WITH reference to royals being the only living people on stamps (Letters, March 14): Father Christmas is alive and kicking in our house, yet he appeared on stamps only last year. Clare Kepp, Thatcham, Berks.

Budget talk accelerates the car crash

I WAS interested to read Penelope Rowlett's pre-budget advice (Crackdown on the car could aid environment, March 13) that people owning cars living in rural districts should be asked to pay much less than those in towns.

Commuters into towns might decide to live further afield to minimise excise duty payments. To discourage this practice they would be obliged to pay more for their fuel — with increased fuel duties. The 15 per cent real-term increase she suggests to discourage "unnecessary car journeys" would actually increase the duty and taxes by another 8.5p per litre from the pre-Budget level as the Chancellor also charges VAT on his duties. For the average motorist, the increase would be £100 per year.

The rather blunt instruments of vehicle excise duty and further increases in fuel duties still may not achieve the desired objective of reducing congestion and pollution,

but even lead to more vehicle use in commuting from rural into town areas. Dr M A Friend, Director general, UK Petroleum Industry Association, London.

THE idea that removing road capacity does not lead to gridlock but produces environmental benefits has taken a long time to become accepted (Analysis: Road congestion, March 12).

Mayor Hillman and his colleagues have shown that, in the last 20 years, the freedom of British children has been severely reduced by road traffic. Especially in being prevented from walking to school without an escorting adult. In January, the Chief Medical Officer increased the estimate of the number of people killed by traffic pollution to 24,000 per annum — 4,000 are killed each year in road crashes. For a small inconvenience to a minority, of not being able to drive everywhere, we

gain a large benefit from quieter towns, less pollution and the freedom to walk and cycle safely. Prof Lewis Lesley, Liverpool.

THE tax on fuel is a staggering 80 per cent and I am certain many motorists feel that enough is enough. The car is not just a means of getting from A to B, that would become redundant with an improved transport system. It is a liberating force in many people's lives and is vital to our culture. Les Holley, London.

YOU incorrectly suggested (Plan for free-parking levy, March 11) that the CBI supports taxes on car parking spaces and removing subsidies for company cars.

Certainly the tax system for transport needs reforming. It currently raises £25bn a year from road users and yet still fails to reduce congestion or

provide enough money for investment in roads and public transport. The answer is to ring-fence a proportion of what is paid in road taxes for transport investment. There is also a case for shifting away from fixed taxes such as vehicle excise duty, to "pay-as-you-go" charges, which could include tolls.

Company parking spaces are already paid for by businesses through the rates. Showing this more clearly on the rates bill would provide an incentive for businesses to reduce their parking without the need for an additional tax. Peter Agar, Deputy director general, CBI, London.

THE automobile is dead says Martin Amis in his excellent critique (Road rage and me, March 7). But it is better to be numbed by our car-culture existence than to raise our rail nails on public transport? Travelling from

Harrow to Wembley and on to town the other day, I was hurried around inside a double decker by someone who was taught driving skills somewhere between Brands Hatch and Nairobi. Stepping on to the tube I had the opportunity to read the papers from today, yesterday and the day before, so long as I avoided the sticky bile of the lucozade smeared. So I will remain in my comfort, safe, clean, "motor". Ian McIntyre, London.

IN THE cause of trying to become half fit, I have recently been exposed to "swim lane rage". This takes the form of overtaking in mid-length, deliberate splashing and suggestions that one should move to a slower lane, accompanied with verbal abuse. Are the purveyors working themselves into this frame of mind as they drive to the pool? Graeme Brydon, London.

Romano-British resist attacks by marauding English scholars

READ of the possible non-existence of the Celts with interest (Sceptic casts doubt on the Celts, March 13). Is this a conspiracy of English scholars to undermine the self-confidence of the Scots and Welsh, at a time of political change? The invention of the Celts is mainly a 19th-century English concept.

The Welsh are descendants of the Romano-British population of Britain. I think that is also true of many of the English. I do not subscribe to the theory that the Saxons etc arrived and drove the indigenous Romano-British into the west. Their arrival was probably similar to that of the Normans, a small warrior class which formed a new aristocracy, pushing everyone else down a class.

J G Owen, Caerphilly.

and social attributes. No one, apart from a handful of romantics, makes a serious case for there ever having been a pan-Celtic political entity. Still less is any credence given to the legendary origins of the Celts, linking Greek mythology with the wild invention of Geoffrey of Monmouth et al. Such theories have been discredited by serious academics since Tudor times. David R Williams, Conwy, Wales.

I WAS surprised to find Martin Wainwright so easily duped into publicising the British Museum's forthcoming Celtic Europe exhibition. In his spurious article, The Celts may well have been a disparate group (they are now). What they shared was a fear of losing their identity to the invading English. The article demonstrates why these people still feel a common bond. Ian Salters, London.

Africa short-changed by the US

YOU present a very rosy picture of Bill Clinton's good intentions with the Africa Growth and Opportunity Bill, which has recently been passed in the US House of Representatives (African markets shape Clinton's itinerary, March 16).

You fail to mention that a free-trade agreement between the US and African countries will have similar, though probably even more disastrous, social effects than NAFTA (the free-trade agreement between Canada, the US and Mexico) has had.

Whilst African economies are largely agriculture-based, most farms are small-scale, with little access to land, water and credit. These farmers are likely to have their livelihoods undermined if there is unrestricted trade with the US, which is home to huge, aggressive agribusinesses such as Monsanto. Small farmers in Africa will be unable to compete with cheap imports from agribusiness, and will increasingly be forced into heavy debt; be driven to using envi-

ronmentally destructive practices; driven from their land, and forced to migrate to urban areas that are already overcrowded. In the US, many workers will lose their jobs, as corporations relocate to Africa.

These are just some of the easily predictable effects when such economically unequal areas as Africa and the US are thrown together in a market where each is supposedly on equal terms. Kolya Abramsky, London.

Internet

BELIEVE that Internet Addiction Disorder may soon be officially recognised by American psychiatrists. According to my latest BT phone bill, which lists my Friends & Family favourites, my Best Friend is a computer, to which I connect for Internet access. Do I need a psychiatrist? Michael Pidd, Lancaster.



Learning to smoke under fire

THROUGHOUT the six years of world war two, all the British and Commonwealth armies sold cheaply, through the Nuffield to every soldier, an authorised issue of a weekly tin of 50 cigarettes — seven a day plus one — and the same was true through the Red Cross for all other ranks prisoners of war. I received from my mother on my 18th birthday a 50 note — for not smoking. Within weeks, I got tired of "going through the motions", when the route-march sergeant shouted: "Right then, fall out for 10 minutes and smoke and,

If you haven't got one, go through the motions!" The Red Cross POW ration, traded through other slave labourers, guards or civilians for much needed food, kept the cigarettes of us alive. It would be most unfair to the generation — now in their seventies and eighties — of old soldiers and prisoners, most now suffering from heart and respiratory diseases, should they be lumped together and included in today's Blairite blanket condemnation of all smokers. Alan Hicks, Oxford.

Which ponce?

I'M sure that women everywhere in low-paid part-time work, or those unable to get a job, will thank Julie Burchill for calling them "ponces" (To have and have not, Weekend, March 14). She admits to hanging about the Groucho Club for most of the eighties (very important job that), but still has the gall to champion the cause of working-class women who, as we all know, are the salt of the earth, with their clebs and rollers, worrying about childcare just doesn't enter into the equation. She says "in work lies dignity". So writing sneering, self-regarding bullshit and getting paid for it is dignified is it? Perhaps she should get off her arse down in Brighton, look after her kids and do some (proper) work. Abby Hoffmann, London.

AS A working-class kid myself, I was fortunate to have a mum who stayed at home, apart from the odd job in school dinners, so feel strongly that Julie is wrong to say that "work defines us". She's confusing the exchange of cash for work. Working-class women and single parents all work hard in the unpaid, under-valued arena of the home. My mum was not a "ponce" to care for her family nor are the millions like her, it's a 24-hour job, with no paid sick leave or holidays. Louise Shaw, Norwich.

JULIE Burchill says: "Housework isn't real work; it's just tidying up after yourself." So what is real work? Stacking shelves at Tesco? Cleaning public lavatories? Isn't that just tidying up after the Great British Public? Or does she mean real work like writing articles for national newspapers? Not all jobs are so wonderfully fulfilling as hers. Eleanor Davies, Cady, Wirral.

Funny, all that talk about penises definitely rings a bell

YET AGAIN I am disgusted by the Guardian's so-called columnist Bel Littlejohn. Who does she think she is? I refer of course to her latest diatribe (Penises all over, March 13).

As Don's former partner, I can personally testify that his penis is far from being "small and insignificant". Indeed, I would describe it as extremely average. (I don't know why he gets so hot up about it.)

Of course, writing about his penis in her column is not going to change that. If anything, it will make Don even more self-conscious about the size of his prick.

Does Bel really care? No. She does not mind who she hurts just so long as she can fill her column and revel in the glory. I should have

known that from the way she monopolised the speculum during our group therapy classes on Getting To Know The Earth Mother Inside You at Charing Cross Women's Centre way back then in the seventies.

(PS: Don, you are not small and insignificant to me.) Debbie Foulis, (Real name supplied) London.

BEL Littlejohn's column confirmed what I had long suspected — that she knows a good deal more than she is letting on about that particular organ.

But I was deeply shocked to read that she was on the Women's Studies Encounter Unit at Leeds University in the

early sixties. Why, heavens, she must be about 50, yet, as we can all see from her picture, she has worn so well. Come on Bel, admit it, it's hormone replacement therapy, isn't it? Linda Coffey, London.

COULD someone please point out to Bel Littlejohn that the plural of penis is penes, not penises. Peter Ward, Bath.

IT IS of great concern to me that all of your contributors to the penis articles that appeared in the Guardian last week failed to indicate that it is not the size of a penis when it is "stone cold sober" that

matters; it is the size it can actually grow to. Glyn C Evans, Kenilworth, Warwick.

BEL Littlejohn might care to challenge your photo-archivist to produce a picture of Penis Park. This was, in 1944, a charming grove of large trees in Dimapur/Manipur road, the Assam railroad for the 14th Army.

Under the trees, in my recollection after 50-odd years, were three rows of 20 or 30 identical carved stone phalluses about 30in high, separated by two rows of complementary female symbols.

All were certainly odd, stylised, not in the least offensive, but surprising when you first saw them, and well-named by

the passing soldiery. The word gobsnacked was not then in general use. John Kirk, Bolton.

I WAS comforted by Lynn Fotheringham's concern for the contents of my trousers (Letters, March 13) but dread to think what future generations might find on sale in Marks & Spencer. Jeremy Miles, Bournemouth, Dorset.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters: shorter ones are more likely to appear. The Country Diary is on Page 10.

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**Will
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his
dues**

Spock the protester . . . arrested at a Vietnam rally in 1972

In the 1980s, he became profoundly disillusioned with the

Benjamin McLane Spock, born New Haven, Connecticut, May 2, 1903; died March 15, 1998

[illegible]

MOIST, David (Bass), 15.3.1898 to 1981.
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Analysis Union recognition

Will Tony Blair pay his dues?

The new party of business finds its old roots with the TUC holding firm. In June the Government must deliver its white paper, Fairness At Work. **Seumas Milne** reports

If there is one issue which could test Tony Blair's mastery over his Cabinet to the limit, and finally rupture New Labour's increasingly frosty relationship with its one-time trade union friends, it is the Government's commitment to a legal right to union recognition where a majority of workers want it. On the face of it, the democratic principle seems straightforward enough. But the detail of how it is implemented could make all the difference between creating a genuine lever for shifting the current lopsided balance of power in the workplace to, in the most extreme case, a mechanism which could actually lead to increased union de-recognition.

The hard decisions must be taken now — and the political symbolism of the choices the Government faces could scarcely be starker. This is the only manifesto pledge which the Prime Minister's new business allies have seriously balked at, and his attempt to get the TUC and CBI to sort out a compromise between themselves last year ended in deadlock. A white paper, Fairness At Work, with union recognition as its centrepiece, is promised by June with legislation to follow next year. Both sides are waiting for the Government to choose.

In reality, that means waiting for Downing Street to get to grips with the technicalities. Although the Trade and Industry Department is theoretically in charge of the policy, no one is in any doubt that the Prime Minister will take the final strategic decisions. Ministers say he has yet to make up his mind. But early indications of his preferences have filled the unions with alarm. An alleged aside by Geoff Norris, Mr Blair's adviser on employment issues, at an Engineering Employers' Federation conference, to the effect that Mr Blair favoured the CBI's position on recognition balloting rules, sent them into a tailspin.

All the senior union leaders

The Murdoch factor

Did Rupert Murdoch strike a deal with Tony Blair over Labour's commitment to a legal right to union recognition? Some senior TUC leaders are convinced that watering down the pledge was one of the trade-offs for the support of the media mogul's newspapers, and one News International executive has said privately that the firm has been lobbying heavily.

The transport union leader Bill Morris said last month: "We know that Rupert Murdoch would be upset... but it wasn't Mr Murdoch who voted in this Government". Both Blairite and Trade and Industry Department ministers insist that the issue has not been raised in contacts with the world's most powerful press and TV proprietor — who has, they say, got bigger fish to fry. The pressure, they claim, has all come from the CBI — though Mr Murdoch's News International is represented on the CBI's union recognition working party, set up last month to lobby the Government.

But there is no doubt that

have issued unusually belligerent warnings in recent weeks. John Edmonds, the GMB general union leader and TUC president, promised Countryside Alliance-style mass demonstrations if New Labour undermined its pledge on rights at work. Roger Lyons, leader of the technical staff union MSF, declared that if the Government came down in favour of the employers, it "could make the split on the lone parents benefit look like a vicar's tea party". The Transport and General Workers' Union leader, Bill Morris, said it was a "defining issue for trade unionists — there is simply no room for compromise". Even John Monks, the TUC's cautious gen-

eral secretary, warned that if the issue went the wrong way it would be decisive for union-Government relations.

But Tony Blair faces an acute dilemma. Nothing could be more central to the New Labour project than his embrace of big business. That should hardly be a problem, when 44 out of Britain's top 50 companies are unionised. But several well-placed employers are taking a hard line. Inconveniently, one is Sir Colin Marshall, British Airways chairman and the CBI's president. Another is Sir Clive Thompson, chief executive of Rentokil Initial, who insists that a legal right to union recognition will open the

doors to 1970s-style militancy and damage company performance. Most threatening, from the TUC's point of view, is the influence of Rupert Murdoch's News International, which led the way in union-busting during the Thatcher years — and is represented on the CBI's union recognition working party.

Labour's manifesto promised recognition where a "majority of the relevant workforce vote in a ballot for a union to represent them". The first choice the Prime Minister will have to make is whether that should mean a majority of those voting, as the TUC wants — and as almost every other ballot and election in the country is conducted — or a majority of those eligible to vote, as favoured by the CBI. The employers' organisation also insists on another initial hurdle: a "majority petition", comprising 30 per cent of the workforce, before any ballot is held.

But the heat is off that particular issue — the compromise is expected to be a majority of those voting, with a minimum turnout threshold. Now the struggle has focused on CBI demands that strikes over recognition disputes should be made illegal, that the right to collective bargaining should not cover training, and that employees on personal contracts should be excluded from any recognition award.

What the CBI is insisting on

- 1 Unions must prove that 50 per cent of employees support bid for recognition before there is any final ballot.
- 2 Firms with fewer than 50 employees should be exempt from a right to union recognition law.
- 3 Employers should have the right to decide which group of workers should be balloted on whether they want union representation.
- 4 Union recognition should be granted only if a majority of all eligible employees back it — not just a majority of those voting.
- 5 Employees should be free to opt out of union collective representation, even if half the workforce has voted for recognition.
- 6 Training should be excluded from collective bargaining as it relates to individual needs and business practice.
- 7 Strikes should be banned in disputes about union recognition.

Blair must decide between

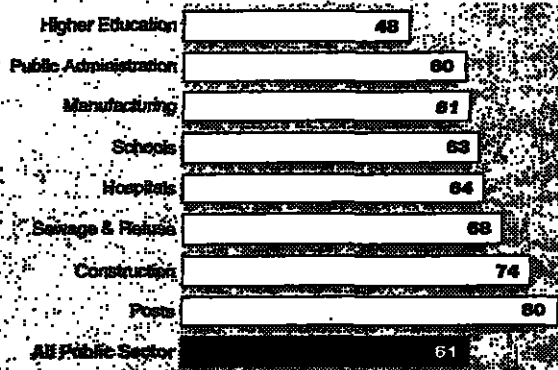
What the TUC is insisting on

- 1 There should be a majority of eligible workers, not just those voting, in any ballot.
- 2 No one should be denied access to a union just because they work for a small company.
- 3 Where the ballot is designed about the bargaining unit, an outside agency should address, otherwise why bother with a ballot at all?
- 4 Insisting on a majority of all eligible workers could lead to unfairness. For instance, an 80 per cent yes on a 50 per cent turnout would be deemed a vote against union recognition.
- 5 Modern labour is used to negotiating personal packages with individual unions.
- 6 Involving unions in training is one of the best ways to gain the commitment of a workforce to raise skill levels.
- 7 It would be unfair to ban strikes over union recognition.

State of the unions

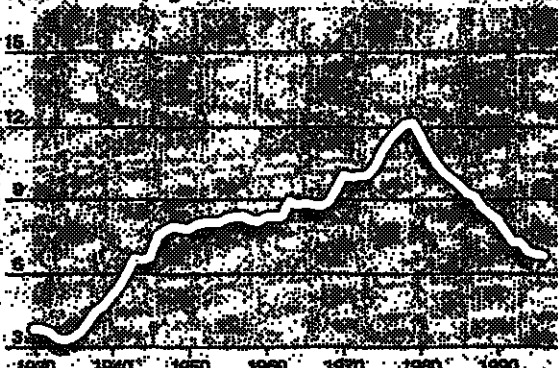
Public sector unionisation

% union and staff association members



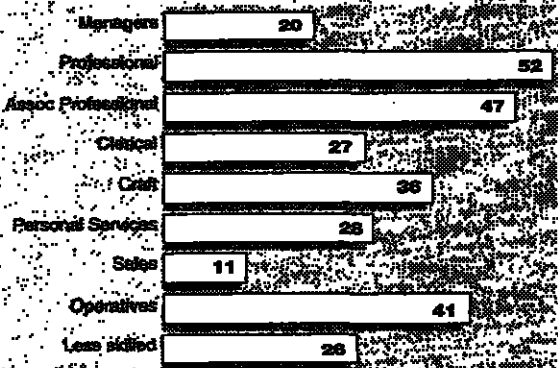
Membership

% membership figures, million



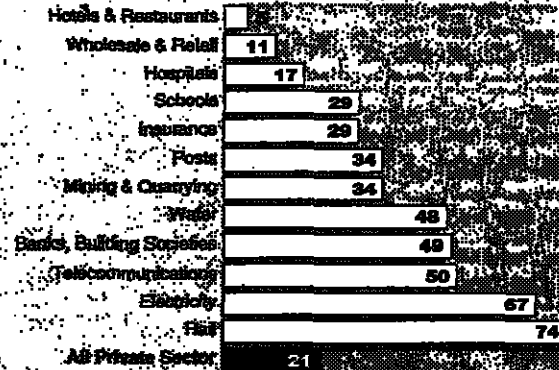
Unionisation by occupation

% union and staff association members



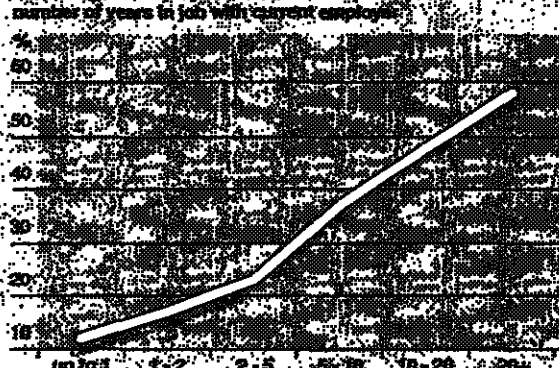
Private sector unionisation

% union and staff association members



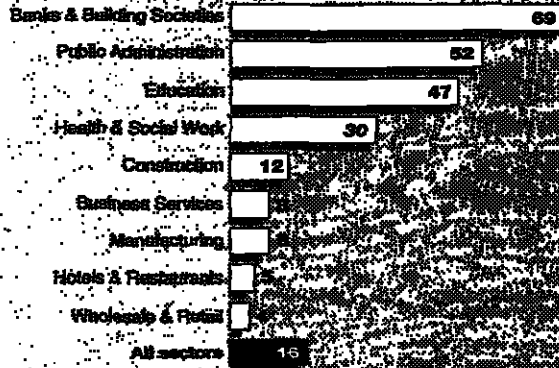
Unionisation by tenure

% membership figures, million



Unionisation in smaller workplace

Power less than 25 employees, %



The notorious
Gordon Brown
8

gates to 1970s-style militancy and damage company performance. Most threatening, from the TUC's point of view, is the influence of Rupert Murdoch's News International, which led the way in union-busting during the Thatcher years — and is represented on the CBI's union recognition working party.

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MORE crucial still is the insistence by the CBI that all firms with fewer than 50 employees should be exempt. That would account for 97 per cent of Britain's firms, and deny a third of the privately-employed workforce the rights promised in Labour's manifesto(1). But the most powerful grenade in the CBI's armoury is its insistence that the employer should decide who should be included in the bargaining unit — or relevant work unit — as the CBI puts it. That means that a majority of those eligible to vote must secure a majority of those voting. If the Government sides with the employers (the TUC wants an independent arbitrator), that could lead to unions actually losing recognition in some companies. Such loopholes have led some unions in the United States, where a right to recognition has existed since the 1930s, to abandon using the legal machinery altogether(2).

Even if the Government miraculously decided to opt for the full TUC position, legislation would change only the industrial relations culture: recognising unions for collective bargaining does not, after all, mean employers have to accept what they say. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has quietly let it be known that he supports the TUC in the dispute, as have other cabinet ministers. The outcome is expected to be some sort of compromise. But Blairite ministers complain that the unions' public lobbying is only making things more difficult. For the Prime Minister, it will be a painful manoeuvre — but whatever is finally decided, he will not tarnish New Labour's image as a party of business.

Sources: (1) Department of Trade and Industry, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Statistics Unit, Sheffield; (2) Institute of Employment Rights, "Recognition Laws - Lessons from Abroad", 1998.

Graphics sources: TUC, CBI, Graphics: Steve Villiers, Research: Mark Espiner, Seumas Milne is the Guardian's Labour Editor.

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Prescott acts on rail safety

Danger fears prompt move against Railtrack

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

THE Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, is to take control of rail safety out of the hands of Railtrack amid mounting criticism that standards are slipping and the public is at risk. He will be given the signal to take the initiative tomorrow, when the Commons select committee on transport asks the Government to tackle the issue as a matter of urgency.

The committee is expected to present a number of options to the Government. It is reported to be ready to propose that Railtrack's safety powers should either be merged with the railway inspectorate or taken over by the Government's new strategic railway authority.

The committee has been concerned that Railtrack — a privatised undertaking which is expected to make profits of £300 million this year, might be tempted to replace profit with safety.

This is the view of the chief inspector of railways, Stan Robertson.

The committee's report will almost certainly pave the way for legislation in the autumn to allow Mr Prescott to shake up the railway industry. Senior advisers last night made it clear that while the Deputy Prime Minister blames the Tories unreservedly for the current state of the industry, he is deeply concerned about its poor public reputation and wants a transport bill this autumn.

Part of the bill would be devoted to setting up the new rail authority, but he still has to clear his plans with the Prime Minister and other Cabinet colleagues.

Mr Prescott's transport White Paper, due in May, will stress his priorities, with the reorganisation of the rail regulatory system as the first.

Mr Prescott said yesterday he was unhappy at the "unreasonable competition" between the two rail regulators. This suggests that the days of the rail franchise director, John O'Brien, are numbered, and that his work will be taken over by the strategic rail authority.

The rail regulator, John Swift, could be given tougher powers while his present authority is clarified.

Railtrack is facing potentially damaging prosecutions later this year over derailments, exposing it to criticism that it failed to supervise maintenance work. In the first case, due to be heard next month, the railway inspectorate is taking Railtrack to court over the derailment of a freight train at Bexley in Kent last year. The train crashed down a viaduct and injured seven people. As a result of the accident, several small businesses had to relocate.

Railtrack's own inquiry found that an emergency fault had been discovered on the busy London commuter line, but that the repair had not been made.

Railtrack has been warned that several more prosecutions could follow after accidents at Uffington, near Swindon, and at Harwich.



Private disaster... Seven were injured when a train was derailed at Bexley, Kent, last year

PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEAVER

Notebook

Dark side of the sterling haven



Alex Brummer

AMONG the early goals of the Clinton administration when it came into office was that of convincing the markets it was serious about dealing with the budget deficit and inflation. This it duly delivered, and along with that sharply lower long-term interest rates.

Gordon Brown, who delivers his first full Budget today, is on a similar virtuous path. The improvement in public finances since Labour came to office, along with the more credible monetary regime put in place by the Bank of England, has produced a remarkable result on the market in government bonds — gilts. The yield on the benchmark 10-year bond has come down from 7.7 per cent during the election campaign in April 1997, to 5.9 per cent last night.

This result, which means lower long-term borrowing costs, reflects the Government's spending restraints — reinforced by fiscal stability — as well as the growing credibility of the anti-inflation regime.

Added momentum has come from Europe. As the process of monetary union has broadened, sterling — outside the euro zone — has looked increasingly like a safe haven. That has been strengthened by the decision of Greece to enter the exchange-rate mechanism, and fears of a softer euro than the Bundesbank would have liked have been worsened.

The darker side is the strength of sterling, happily perched above the three German mark level and showing no signs of the weakness feared in the Bank of England minutes last week. The danger for Mr Brown is that fiscal and monetary stability will be accompanied by manufacturing stagnation.

Family feuds

THE biggest attraction in the City on Budget day will be the annual meeting of First Leisure.

The target of the criticism will be Michael Grade who, having turned Channel 4 into a notable commercial success, moved into the seat of what is a publicly quoted family business. For this privilege, Mr Grade is picking up a salary of £510,000 as chairman and chief executive, with the promise of a share bonus package worth £4.5 million over the next four years.

This is in keeping with First Leisure's past governance. Last year, several executives who left as a result of problems in underlying businesses were rewarded with pay-offs totalling £3.5 million. Part of the company's problem appears to be a board populated by family

old-stagers. Watching over the 6.95 per cent stake held by London Merchant Securities and the remuneration committee are two members of the property family, Lord Rayne and his son, the Honourable Robbie Rayne. Another committee member is John Woolf, who took up the seat occupied by his father, Sir John Woolf, whose family are shareholders through the British & American Film Investment Trust.

Such arrangements are fine when companies are performing well, but First Leisure shares have been struggling against a strong market, and the company has done nothing to endear itself to the City with extravagant remuneration practices.

Even if shareholders do not order a stop to Mr Grade's financial package at today's meeting, they will begin to focus on improving the governance of a company where nepotism rules. This can be resolved by splitting the job of chairman and chief executive and appointing some powerful counterweights to take care of the broader interests of investors.

In the pink

THE decision by Marjorie Scardino to focus Pearson on the Financial Times brand is working like an act of good sense. The FT is performing well, with American circulation above 50,000 for the first time, contributing to a profit of £34.8 million compared with £14.6 million in 1996. In fact, the new newspaper division is paying off the investment does seem to have over the past year by the strength of the financial markets and takeover activity.

Elsewhere in what is still a complex group, the turnaround at Penguin, after last year's New York fiasco, disguises some less-than-spectacular performances, notably from Channel 5, which managed to gobble up £24.1 million of group earnings. How long shareholders will accept such returns is a matter for debate. Or perhaps, in the digital age, Ms Scardino will quietly let the Channel 5 stake go the same way as Minskipe, which has now been safely offloaded.

The other main area of interest at Pearson is 50 per cent-owned Lazard. Aside from the fact that Pearson has always been regarded as a gentleman's company with upmarket business, Lazard does seem an odd fit within a media conglomerate.

It is not long since Barings gave a sharp reminder of the risks associated with merchant banking. Lazard remains one of the most impressive merger houses, and was largely responsible for the higher profits of £43.1 million over the past year. But the trend in investment banking is towards larger, more global units: Lazard has gone some of the way by putting together asset management business in Europe and New York. The suspicion, however, must be that one of the larger houses will make an offer Mr Scardino will find hard to refuse.

Brussels bows to £8bn accountancy merger

Roger Cowe

THE world's biggest accountancy firm, based on an £8 billion merger, could be created by the end of April, following the European Commission's decision yesterday to cease opposing the combination of Price Waterhouse and Coopers & Lybrand.

After last week's clearance by the United States Justice Department, the move opens the way to merger and a reduction of the number of global auditing companies to just five.

Unless regulators can be persuaded that the existence of only four big firms would not be anti-competitive, this is likely to be the last big accountancy merger. But it leaves Deloitte and Touche in an uncomfortable position, some way behind KPMG and Ernst & Young.

Arthur Andersen, which is splitting from its consultancy partner, will be smaller still but cash-rich, and it is expected to grow swiftly.

The PW/Coopers deal still has to be approved by the European Union, but is likely now to be no longer a problem.

Observers expected a formal objection to be filed at the end of last week, but despite fierce opposition from the

From nine to five

Accounting firms, worldwide net income £bn, 1997



Deloitte, Touche & Pricewaterhouse merged with Coopers & Lybrand to form a new firm, Deloitte & Touche.

Source: International Accounting Bulletin

Coopers argued that the market was more diverse than the Commission suggested.

The decision follows some controversy for the EU's competition directorate. Recently, the competition commissioner, Karel van Miert, has

been at loggerheads with his US counterpart over airline mergers. And last week, Reed Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer, abandoned a mega-merger because of tough conditions imposed by Brussels.

Accountants KPMG and Ernst & Young also abandoned merger plans recently because of opposition from competition authorities. The failure of that deal was seen yesterday as the key to the go-ahead for PW and Coopers. They will have substantial market shares in several EU countries but not reach the 40 per cent level seen to equate as market dominance.

Ian Brindle, UK head of Price Waterhouse and its European deputy chairman, said that "the hard work" was just beginning. Senior appointments have been agreed, and it will be several weeks before key positions are filled in the 125 countries where the firms work.

He said it would be a year or so before the merger of offices was complete. Most job losses are expected to come from a freeze on new appointments and staff turnover.

"I don't anticipate cost savings through redundancies, rather through efficiencies and buying power. But there is bound to be some shrinkage over time," he said.

Professionals in Maxwell and Atlantic cases fined

Lisa Buckingham
City Editor

ACCOUNTANTS at the highest-profile business scandals — Maxwell and Atlantic Computers — were yesterday disciplined and fined by their ruling authority.

Spicer & Oppenheim, the accountancy group which acted as auditor to Atlantic Computers, has been censured and ordered to pay £100,000 for its part in the affair. The result of the disciplinary hearings of the Institute of Chartered Accountants follows Department of Trade criticism.

Peter Goldie, a director of Atlantic and chief executive of its parent company, British & Commonwealth, has been censured as well and expelled from the ICA. He also faces proceedings from the DTI to disqualify him, along with others involved, as a director.

The disciplinary tribunal made its ruling after hearing allegations that Mr Goldie was responsible for failing to tell Atlantic's auditors about the extent of the company's contingent liabilities and of sanctioning several sets of misleading accounts.

In separate hearings into the £450 million pensions scandal perpetrated by Robert Maxwell, the ICA's disciplinary tribunal expelled Michael Stoney, a former director of Mirror Group Newspapers.

The institute said that Mr Stoney had been aware of breaches in a "ring fence" which had been specifically designed to ensure that the finances of MGN were kept separate from those of the private Maxwell companies.

After Maxwell's death in 1991, Mr Stoney failed to disclose the existence of a £50 million loan to those trying to establish the extent of the Maxwell empire's indebtedness.

Jonathan Ford, the former finance director of London and Bishopsgate International — a Maxwell-related investment group — emerged from the disciplinary hearings with an admonishment.

Fit without the fat

Unilever caters for health trend with new margarine

Tony May

UNILEVER made its latest bid for the hearts of the health conscious yesterday by announcing a new margarine which, it claims, can cut cholesterol levels in the body by up to 10 per cent. The company's other products, such as Flora — brand leader in a UK market worth almost £550 million a year — claim to cut absorption of cholesterol by about 1 per cent.

The world's largest producer of spreads and margarines was not predicting the launch of the spread, a food which contains phytoosterol, a vegetable oil extract capable of cutting cholesterol in the bloodstream, the company says. When the clinical trials

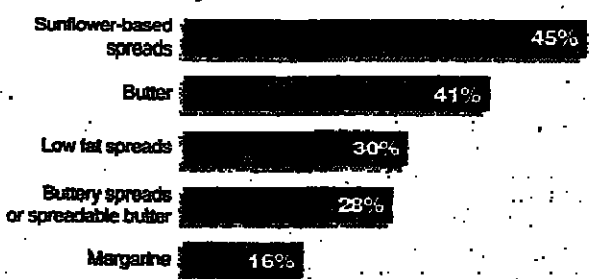
are finished, though, the product will go for approval to the European Union's Novel Foods Committee.

A spokesman said that two of the three clinical trials by third parties were complete; the other, conducted by Oxford's John Radcliffe Hospital, is still under way. Unilever does not have the field to itself. Finland's Raisio Group produces a cholesterol-reducing margarine, Benecol, which is proving successful although it costs almost 10 times as much as other similar products.

With sales in long-term decline, this is a keenly contested sector. Consumers are not only trying to cut down on fat, but are also preparing fewer meals at home. They are being wooed by conveniences like cooking sauces,

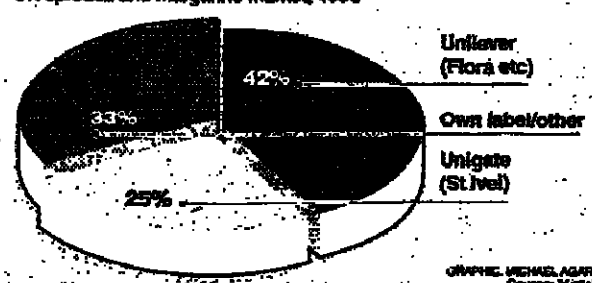
Spreading it thick

What customers buy



Market share

UK spreads and margarine market, 1996



basted meats, and ready-made meals. The industry has countered the tendency to buy fewer spreads with heavy marketing and new products.

But this is a complex market, and the industry is returning to butter, perhaps confused by the industry's conflicting health claims.

Researchers wrestle with cholesterol's mysteries

Tim Radford
Science Editor

CHOLESTEROL is naturally the stuff of confusion. It comes in two forms: high-density and low-density lipoproteins.

The first takes cholesterol away from the blood vessels and to the liver. The second, low-density lipoprotein, goes to the blood vessel walls where it builds up as a waxy plaque. So the low-density is the "bad" cholesterol associated with cardiovascular diseases.

But researchers have been wrestling for more than a decade with precisely how and why cholesterol levels are affected, when risks begin and which group is most at risk. Almost every week a research team produces new findings.

The Israelis last year reported that licorice extract seemed to prevent a build-up in the arteries. Then the Finns began experimenting with a margarine that blocked the stuff in the inter-

tine. A New York team found that even "good" cholesterol could bump up blood pressure during stressful moments.

A Florida team found that "good" cholesterol had a way of turning into its evil twin — at least in mice. A New York Harvard team produced a steamed shrimp — actually high in cholesterol although low in fat — which might even be good for people with normal cholesterol levels.

But there has never been much doubt about the main thrust of the argument that for most people, diets that are low in fat are healthier. The less fat, the lower the cholesterol levels and the lower the risk of heart attack or stroke. And that seems to hold true for everybody, according to a study last week at Columbia University.

"The message is unchanged," said Henry Ginsberg of Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. "Take the saturated fats out of your diet and eat more fruits and vegetables."

News in brief

Britain tops EU safety league

Britain has Europe's best safety record at work, according to a survey by the EU's Luxembourg-based Eurostat office.

There are fewer fatalities among UK workers in high-risk jobs than anywhere else in the European Union and fewer injuries at work than anywhere but Sweden. Construction, agriculture and transport are the most dangerous businesses for workers. There has been a sharp drop in deaths and accidents in the next most risky jobs — wholesaling and retailing, finance and catering.

Sun Life shines

Share prices in the UK's third-biggest life assurance company nudged back to their all-time peak yesterday with 1997 profits more than doubled to £338 million. Sun Life & Provincial's results were boosted by last year's merger with AXA

Equity & Law

At the same time, Cornhill Insurance said tough competition for car and home insurance reduced its profits to £58.8 million in 1997 from £61.6 million a year earlier.

Bull run

Sir George Bull, the outgoing chairman of Diageo, the world's biggest drinks group formed from the merger of Grand Metropolitan and Guinness, is to become deputy chairman of Sainsbury, the supermarket company.

BTR banks \$650m

The aggressive disposal programme at BTR, which is attempting to reshape itself into a more focused engineering company, continued yesterday with the sale for \$650 million of its building materials businesses. The sale will help return \$2 billion to its shareholders before early next year.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2,423	Germany 2,958	Malaysia 6,229	Singapore 2,83
Austria 2,778	Greece 526.43	Mexico 1,643	South Africa 8.08
Belgium 90.80	Hong Kong 12.57	Netherlands 3,318	Spain 245.25
Canada 2,302	India 58.58	New Zealand 2.79	Sweden 12.27
Cyprus 1,176	Ireland 1,176	Norway 12.32	Switzerland 257
Denmark 11.33	Israel 5.98	Portugal 301.85	Turkey 374.940
Finland 9,045	Italy 2,934	Saudi Arabia 9.16	USA 1,835
France 8,893			

Supplied by NatWest (excluding Japan, Thailand and Maldives)

First day of the Cheltenham Festival

Ron Cox expects Richard Dunwoody to show the way home on Richard Rowe's six-year-old

I'm Supposin's form looks just champion

JUST as prelims never quite prepared the student for the final exam, this season's series of trials are likely to prove largely misleading when the 18 runners face the starter for the Smurfit Champion Hurdle at Cheltenham today. With one exception: I'm Supposin's race at Wincanton.

An impressive 19-length win, backed up by a fast time in the Kingwell Hurdle put I'm Supposin right back in the running for major honours after several below-par efforts in prep races run at a crawl on testing ground.

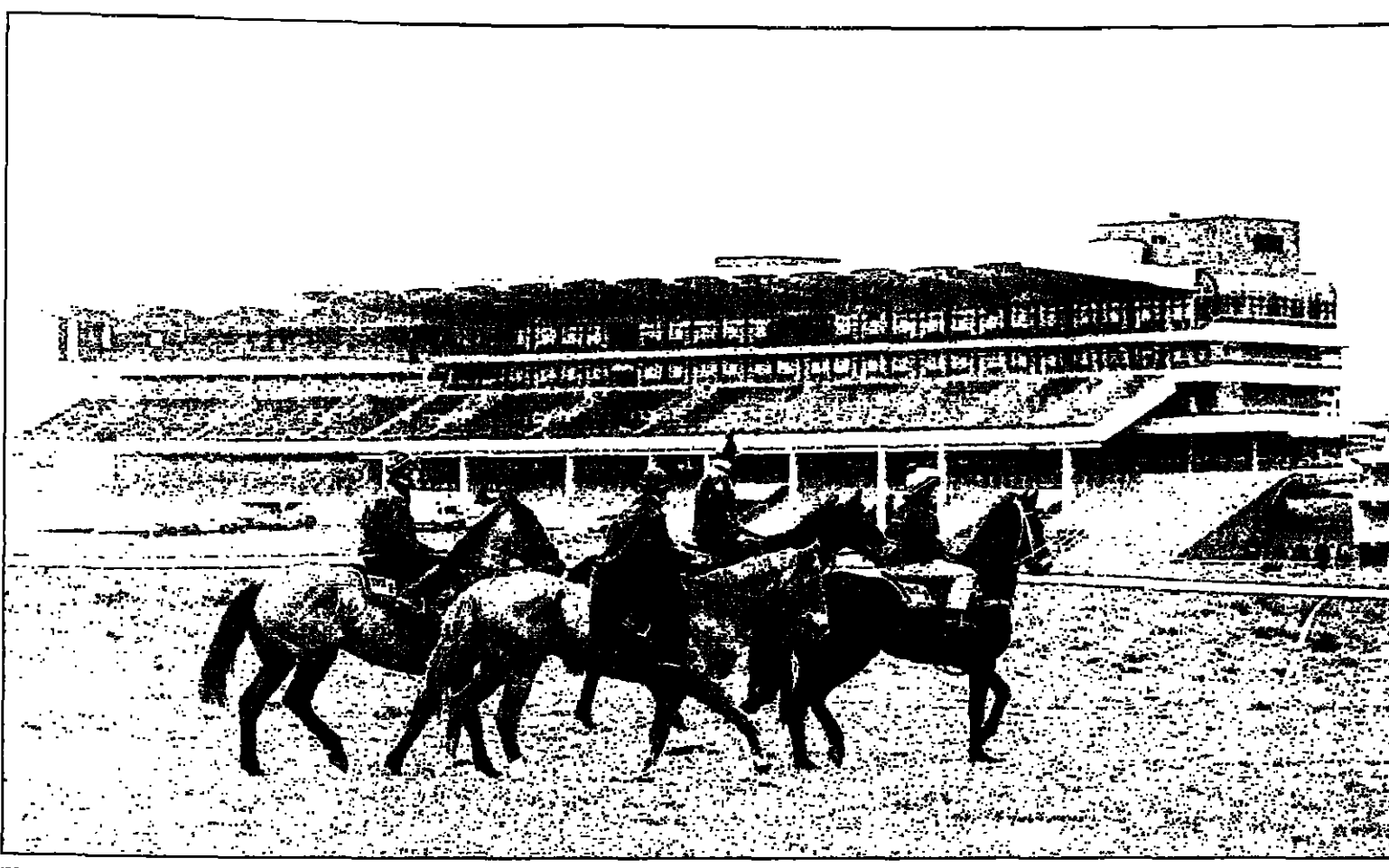
Every hour of drying weather improves the chance of I'm Supposin, who finished fourth to Make A Stand in last year's Champion Hurdle on only his third start over timber. But fast ground is not essential.

I'm Supposin won his novice races on soft ground when trained in Ireland last term, but the key to his best form, in my opinion, is a proper gallop on which he has to get this season until Wincanton.

Still an entire horse, I'm Supposin has taken plenty of getting fit and Richard Rowe, his trainer, has made no secret of the fact that I'm Supposin would not be at his best until March.

A change of jockey can work wonders too, and with Richard Dunwoody aboard for the first time this season, I'm Supposin left previous form behind with a resounding success over Master Beveled in the Kingwell.

It is easy to pick holes in that form, as is the case with most of today's leading contenders. But Master Beveled had previously accounted for Shadow Leader, Marengo, and Sammartino at Sandown, where I'm Supposin was only fifth in a race not run to suit, and has since performed cred-



Florida Pearl, favourite for tomorrow's Royal Sun Alliance Chase, leads other Irish hopefuls after a gallop on the Cheltenham racecourse yesterday

itally against Red Blazer at Haydock.

I'm Supposin has a good blend of speed and stamina, the former perhaps a quality lacking in Istabraq's makeup. He was all out to win the Sun Alliance Hurdle (2m 5f) last year and no winner of that race has gone on to Champion Hurdle glory — a fact worth bearing in mind as Istabraq

bids to become the first Irish-trained champion hurdler since Dawn Run in 1984. Istabraq may well find the necessary change of gear, but his price is prohibitive and I suggest I'm Supposin (3.15) to win, with an each-way saver on Pridwell.

Third behind Collier Bay Hurdle glory — a fact worth bearing in mind as Istabraq

8lb better off with Relkeel on their running in the Bula Hurdle, where the layout of the New Course at Cheltenham would not be in his favour as much as today's circuit.

With a maximum field of 30 getting the meeting under way in the Clifton Supreme Novice Hurdle, there are bound to be some hard luck

stories. But if he steers clear of trouble Zarzulaska (2.40) has the speed and jumping ability to give a welcome back to Adrian Maguire, who has had to sit out the last three Festivals.

Queen Of Spades (2.35), 10-1 with Hill's and Coral, is excellent value in the Guinness Arkle Trophy and, although 16lb out of the handi-

cap proper, Luv-U-Frank (3.55) could prove to be very well treated in the William Hill Handicap Chase.

A series of easy wins in minor company will have boosted Luv-U-Frank's confidence. He can initiate a double for Martin Pipe and Tony McCoy who can also score with Unsinkable Boxer (5.05).

Rest of the Cheltenham programme

RON COX	TOP FORM
2.00 Zarzulaska	Zarzulaska
2.35 Queen Of Spades	Queen Of Spades
3.15 I'm Supposin	I'm Supposin
3.55 Luv-U-Frank (nsp)	Luv-U-Frank
4.30 Red Blazer	Red Blazer
5.05 Unsinkable Boxer (nb)	Unsinkable Boxer

(Old Course). Left-handed circuit of 19m with 350yds run-in. A testing, undulating track with soft fences.

Going: Good to soft. Soft in places. Denotes blunders.

Long distance travellers: Great Eastern (5.05) W Storey, County Durham, 242 miles.

Seven day winners: None.

Blindfolded first time: 2.00 Zarzulaska, 2.35 Queen Of Spades, 3.15 I'm Supposin, 3.55 Luv-U-Frank, 4.30 Red Blazer, 5.05 Unsinkable Boxer.

2.00 CITROEN SUPRENOVE HURDLE	CH4
101 21314 Austerlitz (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
102 4111 Austerlitz (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
103 4111 Austerlitz (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
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150 4111 Austerlitz (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8

Southwell all-weather card

TONY PALEY	TOP FORM
1.20 Depreciate	Depreciate (nb)
1.50 Depreciate	Depreciate
1.50 Depreciate	Depreciate
2.55 Depreciate	Depreciate
3.05 Depreciate	Depreciate
4.40 Depreciate	Depreciate
5.15 Depreciate	Depreciate

All-weather, fibreglass, left-handed track of 11m with 31 run-in. Separate spur provides straight 5f.

Going: Standard. Denotes blunders.

Seven day winners: None.

Blindfolded first time: 2.55 Depreciate, 3.05 Depreciate, 4.40 Depreciate, 5.15 Depreciate.

1.20 THOROUGHBRED HANDICAP (DIV 1)	CH4
101 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
102 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
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150 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8

1.50 DARTMOOR LIMITED STAKES (DIV 1)	CH4
101 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
102 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
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126 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
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135 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
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149 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
150 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8

2.20 THOROUGHBRED HANDICAP (DIV 2)	CH4
101 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
102 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
103 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
104 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
105 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
106 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11-8
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113 00-00 Depreciate (nb) (M) M. J. Haggerty 5-11-8	A. Haggerty 5-11

Champion Hurdle day at Cheltenham, page 13
Newcastle board under pressure, page 14

Gascoigne out in the cold, page 14
Woodward picks tyro fly-half, page 15

SportsGuardian

Lee gives up £30m City as a bad job

Ian Ross on turmoil at Maine Road as the chairman quits with a swipe at managers

MANCHESTER City's sorry season took another dramatic turn yesterday when the chairman Francis Lee stepped down. Lee, hailed as a saviour when he swept to power four years ago, abandoned his attempt to turn back the Maine Road clock and, in resigning, bowed to mounting public pressure. He attacked managers who "wasted millions on poor players" and people inside Maine Road "who have tried to blacken my name".

"In the last four years upwards of £30 million has been spent in one way or another and we have got very little to show for it," he said. "When I arrived we bought Paul Walsh, Uwe Rösler and Peter Beagrie and they kept us in the Premiership. But the players we bought from then on have not been worth the money we paid for them, with the exception of George Kinkladze."

City's new chairman is David Bernstein but in the short term arguably the most significant promotion yesterday was that of the former City player Dennis Tuerst to director of football.

With Lee also standing down as a director, John Wardie, joint owner of the JD sportswear business, was elected to the board. With his business partner David Makin, Wardie holds a 19 per cent shareholding in City.

"I have taken this decision

because my family, personal life and business life have been severely disrupted by events at the club in the past few months, to such an extent that it has become impossible for me to carry on," said Lee. "I took great pride in playing for City and I was also very proud to have become chairman. Over the past four years I have tried very hard to create a situation where everyone would be proud, pleased and privileged to be associated with City."

"I feel I have done my very best. Many improvements have been made off the pitch but the performance of the chairman is judged by what happens on the pitch. I leave with my integrity and character intact."

Lee leaves with City at



Lee... 'I tried my best'

their lowest ebb, just a heart-beat away from disaster. Saturday's defeat by Port Vale left them third from bottom in the First Division.

Although Lee holds only 11 per cent of the City shares his resignation opens up the possibility of the club becoming embroiled in yet another damaging takeover battle. It is known that there are two, possibly three, consortiums anxious to seize control at Maine Road — something which would be achieved by buying up the shares held by the biggest shareholder Stephen Boler and by Brenda Swales, widow of the former chairman.

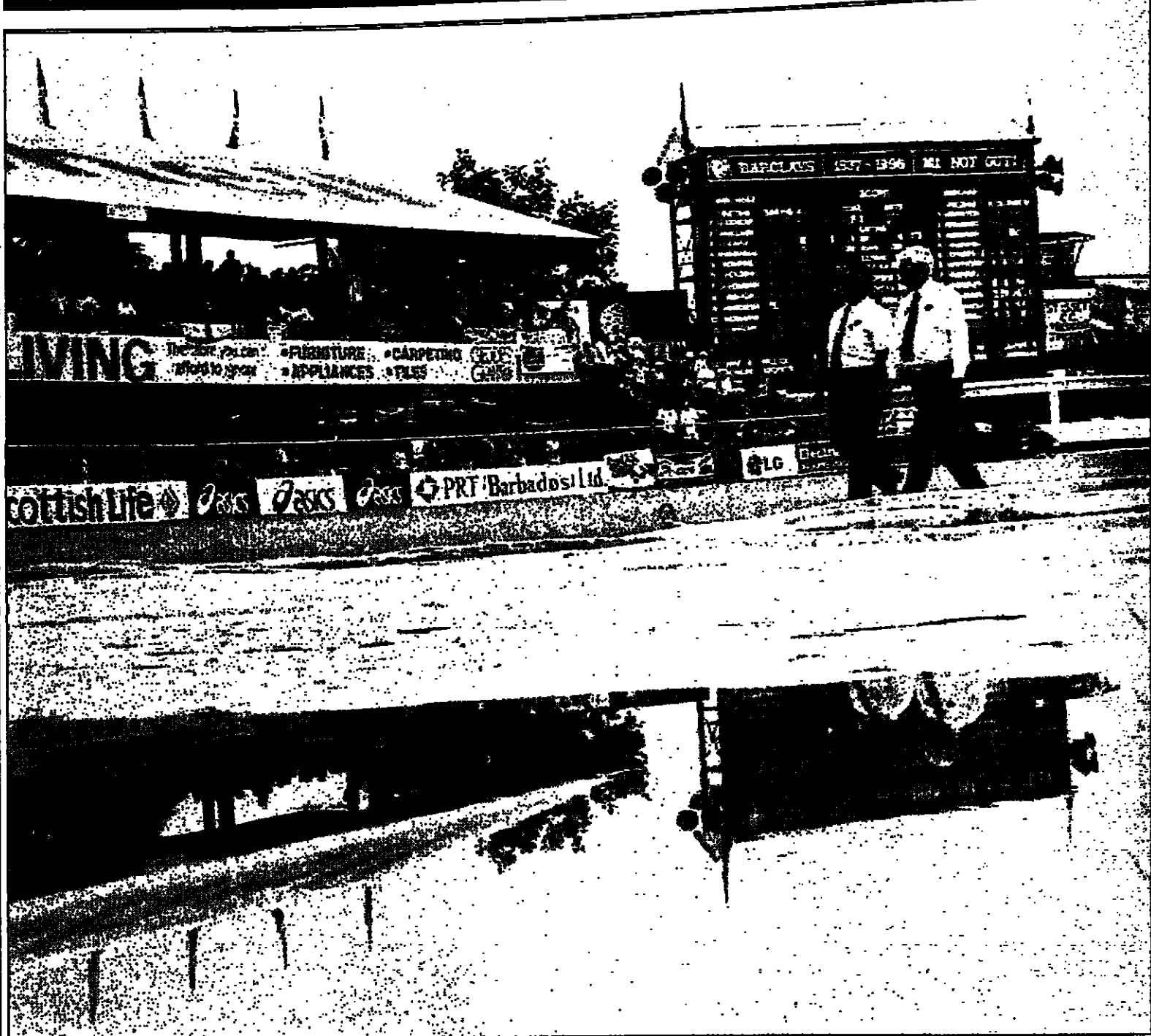
A leading contender seems certain to be the wealthy Manchester businessman Mike McDonald, who recently resigned as chairman of Sheffield United.

When Lee gained power he promised a far-reaching revolution of thought and deed, but despite going through six managers in four years he was unable to effect a change in fortune for the club. Yesterday's developments will almost certainly precipitate the sale to Ajax in the summer of Kinkladze, City's one player of genuine class.

The news of Lee's sudden departure clearly disappointed City's latest manager Joe Royle. "I have the greatest respect for Francis both as a friend and as a true supporter of City," he said.

A second casualty on a bad day for chairman yesterday was Second Division Wolves, who resigned following demonstrations during Saturday's 3-0 defeat at Grimsby.

Rain ruins Test climax in Bridgetown



England thwarted

Water torture... the crowd and players can only wait as umpires check the covers after the rain that washed out the morning's play in Barbados, restricted the final day's play to 18 overs between the showers, and ensured that West Indies retain the Wisden Trophy. ● Mike Selvey and B C Pires, page 15

PHOTOGRAPH: REBECCA NADEN



Jim White

Not an ideal time to put your shirt on Newcastle

IT COULDN'T have happened to a nicer pair of blokes. Freddie Shepherd and Douglas Hall, Newcastle United's chairman and vice-chairman, have been under scrutiny by the News of the World.

The paper's allegations that the two frequented brothels across Europe were presented on Sunday in some detail. Even Bill Clinton would have difficulty wriggling out of this one.

In normal circumstances a yarn about a couple of businessmen behaving badly should concern no one outside their immediate families. But

in among the pair's comedic alleged boasting about their female conquests — if such a term is appropriate for the kind of financial transactions alleged — a couple of claims emerged which will have wider repercussions.

One centres on the departure of Andy Cole to Manchester United back in 1995. The player was released, the News of the World alleges Hall told its reporter, because Newcastle were worried that he might never fully recover from a serious operation. Knowingly selling damaged goods? If true, the FA might have something to say on that one.

But by far the more explosive claim concerns the two directors' alleged attitudes to their regular customers. The News of the World claims that as the pair sat in a Marbella brothel (to which they had flown by private jet immediately after their club's FA Cup quarter-final victory) they joshed about the saps who had financed their little post-match jaunt: the fans of Newcastle United.

This allegation has not been greeted with any surprise on Tyneside. Shocked is not a word being bandied about in the pubs along the Bigg Market. Taxi drivers are not swerving across the road in astonishment as the news fills the local radio.

There has, for the past year

or so, been a nebulous sense among United's followers that the Sir John Hall revolution, the crusade to snap the dormant behemoth of a club out of its coma and turn it into the biggest in the land, has changed its focus.

These days, since Sir John retired and handed over power to his son, the suspicion is that what matters most in the directors' box is the well-being of its occupants.

This is not to suggest no one has been angered by the allegations, particularly about Hall and Shepherd revelling in the "rip-off" that is the replica kit and cheerily boasting about its worth as a cash-cow.

NEWCASTLE fans have long been renowned for their affection for a black-and-white striped shirt, the fashion which makes the inside of St James' on match days resemble a giant barcode. They have known for years that they have been overcharged for their annual fix of nylon, but were prepared to pay over the odds if the profits were boosting the team; it's a bit of a subsidy, doing your bit for the lads. Discovering instead that you may be subsidising something else is another matter entirely.

"It's not the morals thing that's upset the fans," one angry caller told a North-east

radio phone-in. "It's the contempt shown for us."

The bad news for Hall and Shepherd is that the allegations have come at almost precisely the wrong moment. Newcastle may be in the Cup semi-finals but their recent league form has left them falling down the Premiership like a Branson balloon.

Playing in front of silent supporters, enervated by the change from the gung-ho football of the Keegan era to the Mogadon caution of Dalglish, the team appear to have lost the art of winning. With four of their last seven away matches against the top four teams, and Barusley, below them, hitting fine form, this is no time to turn forgetful.

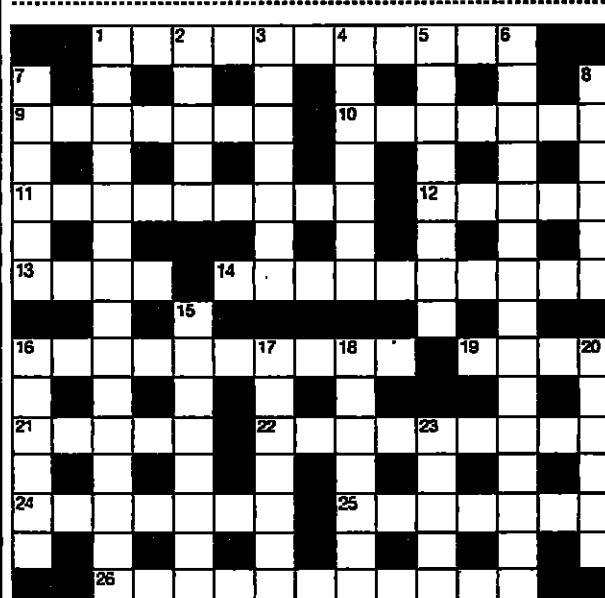
Meanwhile the finances of a club saddled with the biggest wage-bill in the country and debts that make the Duchess of York look frugal continue to send shudders round investors. Newcastle shares dipped again as reports circulated of the alleged behaviour of those with hands on the financial tiller.

Anyone who paid £500 for a piece of the action on flotation saw their investment worth slightly less than £216 yesterday. Both in the City and the stands, it seems, Freddie Shepherd and Douglas Hall may not readily be forgiven.

Board stays silent, page 14

Guardian Crossword No 21,224

Set by Paul



Across
1 Drunk at mistletoe should demonstrate 16 across (11)
9 Repeating it time 'n' time again (7)
10 Poor, poor Paul, without a love but with many a friend (7)
11 R. Nite meandering into lake where she may be swan? (9)
12 Stand down? No! Don't retire (3,2)

Down
1 Athens' religious emblem? No debts! Take 'em away! (3,5,7)
2 Cancel royal sea trip (5)
3 Hefty model — fertile bird (7)
4 Stop something that slithers over roofing material (7)
5 Paul's after gold, the pretender (6)
6 It's explosive — bottle required (7,8)
7 River — trickle without source (6)
8 Padre right to convert man of the cloth (6)
15 Pleasure-seeking male, educated male, is male (8)
16 "The Jazz Singer" was the first with Jolson on the grand wearing tie (6)
17 Pardon slave with B.O. problem (7)
18 Each is composed, for each is more reasonable (7)
20 Delicate offer (6)
23 Chin up — it's not hard to turn around wars (3-4)

SHEPHERD AT HEART
C L A A B E V O
A D A P T O R A D A N T
N P O Y T O R Y
D I S C H A R G E S L I D E
A B E I T C
L O D G E D I S C O V E R
V C A M
C O M P E T E N T E A T E R
L O G I H
E X I S T L A B E L L E
A G R I I L S U
N E T P A L L C L A T T E R
G E T L A M L L
P E R A N C E L I D L E S S
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Solution tomorrow
23 Stuck? Then call our solutions line on 0901 338 228. Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Service supplied by ATS.
NEWSPAPER SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up of 42% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

spanish inquisition?

aston villa vs atletico madrid from 7:30pm tonight on 5



Labour

PER HOUR OF utmost earnestness. Mr Brown... the dedicated... preparation he has... training for years... supply. Hugo Young... pressed his speech.